

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

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No. 946.—VOL. XXXVII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JUNE 18, 1881.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[AFTER LONG YEARS.]

HER BITTER FOE;

OR,

A STRUGGLE FOR A HEART.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Lost Through Gold," "Strong Temptation,"

&c., &c.

CHAPTER IV.

REJECTED LOVE.

And you must love him ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

LORD NORTON went abroad with his daughter-in-law and his new-found grandchild; they travelled in many foreign countries. Rosalie learned to speak French and Italian as a native and to sing so proficiently that critics raved about her voice and declared it was a pity she was an heiress, she would have made her fortune on the stage.

The neglected girl blossomed in prosperity like a flower in the sunshine. She had been awkward and ignorant, she became graceful and accomplished. Fortune smiled upon our heroine, and time gave her the gift for which she had always longed. The plain girl developed into a beautiful woman. At sixteen she had been almost ugly; at twenty she was the cynosure of all eyes. Men raved about her beauty, poets inscribed their verses to her, artists painted her

as Cleopatra and Medea. In a word, Lord Norton's grand-daughter was the queen of the little society of English residents at Rome.

The old peer was delighted at her triumph, gentle Mrs. Norton felt puzzled. She was pleased that Rosalie was beautiful and popular, but she would have preferred to be able to understand her niece. She could not imagine why the young heiress refused to return to England, why she persisted in lingering in Rome instead of going home to be presented to the queen and take her rightful place among the other noble daughters of Belgravia.

"Don't you ever wish we were at home?" she asked her niece, gently, one spring evening, when there was a strangely softened expression on Rosalie's face. "I should think you were tired of wandering by this time."

Rosalie smiled a little bitterly.

"England was not so very kind to me that I should be in a hurry to return to it, Aunt Fanny."

"But it is so different now. You are an heiress, and you ought to become accustomed to your own home. I think it would break your grandfather's heart if you married an Italian."

"I shall never marry an Italian."

"Then is it kind to stay here and deceive Count Rossi with false hopes? He loves you dearly, Rosalie. He has said as much to my father."

A burning blush crimsoned the girl's face.

"He is very good. He is far better than I deserve."

"I do not say that. Only if you do not mean to marry him is it kind to encourage him to hover about you like a moth near a candle?"

"I think he understands."

They went to a ball at the English Embassy

that night. Rosalie wore floating robes of white satin relieved with roses of deep crimson. The same flowers were twined in her hair. The Norton diamonds flashed on her neck and arms. Never before had she looked so lovely.

"There will be sore hearts to-night, I am thinking," said her grandfather, as he led her to the carriage. "My darling will be queen of the ball."

"Only in your eyes."

But indeed everyone was ready to endorse Lord Norton's verdict. The young heiress was perfectly besieged by claimants for the honour of a dance. In a moment her programme was completely filled.

Her first partner was the nobleman for whom Mrs. Norton had pleaded, the young Count Rossi. He was certainly the most eligible of Miss Norton's admirers. He possessed a princely palace and a noble income, and his name had been known in Rome for centuries. The Rossis had been a chivalrous, generous race and a singularly prosperous one until Carlos, the last of his line, fell a victim to the beauty of Rosalie Norton.

All eyes were on the pair as they moved round the room to the strains of a soft, dreamy waltz. In looks, at least, they were well watched, for the count was a model of manly beauty. He had large, expressive violet eyes inherited from his English mother, and the regular features and classic profile which were common to his family.

When the dance was over he made no attempt to restore Miss Norton to her chaperone. Instead he led her out on to the terrace where they could see a thousand stars shining in the clear Italian sky and smell the perfumes of a

thousand southern flowers. Rosalie trembled just a little. She knew this man loved her as his very life. By her own never-forgotten passion for Keith Jocelyn she could understand his feelings.

"Miss Norton, I think you know why I have brought you here. What I have to say can be no news to you. You must have guessed, my secret."

He spoke English without the slightest foreign accent, but there was a passionate tenderness in his voice which told of the foreign blood flowing in his veins. To him Rosalie Norton was a divinity to be worshiped. His whole life hung upon her reply.

Rosalie was moved. Bitterly as she could hate, fiercely as she could revenge wrongs, she was quick to appreciate a nobler nature than her own. She knew that no man could ever love her more than Carlos, that when she and Keith met again he might have forgotten her completely, but all the same she knew she would sacrifice all the world to become his wife, that she would rather spend her life at his side, unloved, uncared for, yet with the right to love him, than accept the splendid destiny which Count Rossi could offer his bride.

"You are keeping me in suspense, Rosalie," cried her lover. "Do not torture me. Have pity on my great love and end this misery of doubt."

She looked up into his eyes and read the yearning tenderness in their depths. Then she cried, passionately:

"I wish there was no such thing as love. It brings nothing but misery everywhere. You love me, and I, alas! have nothing to give you in return. I cannot marry you. My whole heart is another's."

"Another's," and for an instant his face darkened angrily. "Would it not have been honest to tell me that you were promised?"

"You do not understand. I am not promised. It is only that long ago someone won my heart. While it beats I think it will be his still."

"And you will be his wife?"

A look of mute agony crossed the girl's face. "It cannot be that he undervalues such a prize," said the Italian, eagerly.

Rosalie shook her head.

"He has not seen me for years. When we parted I was an ugly, awkward child; it may be that he has forgotten; but I—I shall remember while life lasts."

"He will never forget," said Carlos, simply.

"Rosalie, such faces as yours are not forgotten."

"I have trusted you," she whispered, "I felt you would keep my secret. You love yourself and so you understand—no one else would."

"I understand," he answered, simply, "you love an Englishman—a grave, proud Englishman you have not met for years, yet at one wave of his hand you are ready to follow him through the world."

No words will describe the pathos of this speech. The count judged of Rosalie's love by his own passion for her.

A long, long silence between the two. Carlos could hear the beatings of Rosalie's heart as they paced up and down together. At last he turned to her.

"And if it should be all in vain?"

"What all in vain?"

"Your love. You say yourself love brings pain as much as pleasure. What if the man to whom you have given your heart adores another?"

"I think I should kill her."

The words escaped our heroine on impulse. A moment later and she regretted them. Carlos did not allude to them as he answered:

"And if it should be so, my queen, if the man you have deigned to love be cold enough—fool enough—to scorn such a precious gift, would you then accept my hand? I would surround you with happiness, I would anticipate your every wish, obey your slightest caprice. In time I should make you love me."

She shook her head.

"It is not much I ask," he said, impatiently,

"merely to be given what another has rejected. Rosalie, listen to me. If only you will promise me one thing I swear to you that I will never speak of love until you give me leave. I will be your servant, your friend, your brother, I will serve you faithfully for all time."

"And the promise?"

"If you do not marry him that you will come to me."

Rosalie hesitated.

She knew quite well that for her happiness meant Keith Jocelyn; without the hope of seeing him again life would be a blank. Then she thought of Carlos and his faithful devotion. If Keith rejected her affection she cared little what became of her; perhaps she had better promise.

"Do you know what you are asking?" she said to the count, suddenly. "Do you think a woman who has passionately loved another man and been scorned by him will make a good wife?"

"I care not for that," he answered, slowly. "To me you are Rosalie; you are my love, my darling. I think I could give up my whole life willingly if but for an hour I might call you mine."

Rosalie was strangely softened; there was something in this love almost beyond her comprehension. Gently she put her hand in his.

"I promise," she whispered, brokenly. "But remember, if the day comes when you can claim that promise I shall bring you nothing but a broken heart."

"Curse on him who has broken it," muttered the Italian between his clenched teeth.

He led her back to the ball-room; the company had begun to wonder at their long absence. Not a few imagined they returned affianced lovers, but not a voice dared to congratulate them—there was something so stately in Rosalie's step, so dignified in the bearing of the count.

Miss Norton went straight up to her chamber and laid one hand gently on her shoulder—an unusual caress from one so thoroughly undemonstrative in general life.

"I am very tired, Aunt Fanny, will you take me home, please?"

In alarm Mrs. Norton started up. What, leave the ball before they had been there an hour? There must be something strangely wrong to occasion such a request. She looked in silence from her niece to the count, as though to ask an explanation. Carlos took it upon himself.

"Miss Norton's fatigue is my fault, I took her out on the terrace and we walked there for a long time."

Mrs. Norton opened her eyes.

"Then you have not been dancing, Rosalie?"

"Oh, no, not after the first."

"And your partners?"

"I don't know, I have not thought of them."

And she sank down on a chair.

Her aunt, perceiving she was really unfit to dance again, agreed that they should leave the ball at once. The count took them to their carriage, wrapping Rosalie in her cloak with such an air of possession that Mrs. Norton was astonished.

"My dear child," she said to Rosalie, when they had started, "I cannot understand you at all. Have you accepted Count Rossi?"

"I have just refused him."

"He does not believe like a rejected lover."

"We have promised to be friends."

"Friends!" repeated the pretty widow, unbelievably. "Rosalie, Count Rossi will never be your friend."

"Why not?"

She had felt sure of it herself, but his language had half-persuaded her.

Mrs. Norton paused. She looked at her niece with well-satisfied pride as she answered:

"My darling, men have something more or less than friendship for faces such as yours. Besides, I for one do not believe in rejected lovers becoming simply friends. Have you never read Lord Byron?"

"Often."

"Then you must have noticed these lines:

"If from passion, which all friendship checks,
And your true feelings known and understood,
No friend like to a woman earth discovers,
So that you have not been, nor shall be, lovers."

In perfect silence the two ladies continued their journey home, only all through the drive Rosalie was thinking of the silent agony in Count Rossi's face.

"He loves me and I love Keith," she said to herself, dreamily. "There is one life spoiled either way. Carlos or I must be disappointed, it all rests with Keith. My love—my hero!"

And her dreams that night were of the shabby rooms at Southvale, where Keith Jocelyn had first roused the gambler's daughter to think of something beyond the petty routine of her daily life.

Had he done her kindness or cruelty none could say yet—that was a mystery hidden in the book of the future.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER THE TRAMP OF EXILE.

Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Whose substance is the sun and face of eternity.

THAT was April evening when Count Rossi pleaded in impassioned words for Rosalie Norton's hand. Keith Jocelyn returned from his long travels in foreign lands.

No one save quite knew the reason why the young man had remained so long away from England, or why in his travels he seemed to have avoided all the courtly towns and best-known watering-places of Europe. He had been gone four years and none of his friends who had spent the autumn abroad had ever chanced to meet him. He seemed to follow no settled place of travel, but to wander aimlessly about.

There was a secret in Keith's life. A secret he would keep for all time keep from those who loved him best. A moment's folly bitterly repented of had cost him sore, the burden had pressed heavily upon him, turning his life into weariness. Now all this was past and he was free.

He was in the heart of Norway when the news reached him. It was almost more than he could believe at first, the relief was so great, so intense. As soon as he had realized the tidings he set off for England, henceforward to take his rightful place as the heir of Jocelyn, the prop and stay of his father's declining years.

"They little know," he murmured, reading over one of his mother's recent letters in which she lamented his absence, "that I only kept away out of kindness to them. Well, it is over now and I am free."

He set out for England. An intense longing was upon him to see his native country again. He travelled with feverish haste. Each enforced delay chafed him; he would fain have given his own impatience to the lagging engines and steamboats.

He sent no letter or telegram to announce his arrival. He wanted to enjoy the surprise his presence would create. It was April, the season had begun. No doubt his people were in town.

"Almost five years since I spent a season in London," he thought, sadly. "It was just before Geoff Hamilton married Louise. Poor Geoff! he was a very devoted lover. I wonder what sort of a husband he has made. A good one I expect. He has been a staunch friend to me."

When Keith reached Victoria a chill apprehension seized him. It was weeks now since he had heard from home. His father was getting an old man. What if anything had happened? He grew nervous and timid as a girl, finally he jumped into a hansom and directed the man to drive at once to Prince's Gate.

"Geoff will know if the old man is all right. Somehow I can't go there without asking first, and besides, he will be glad to see me home, glad to see I can come home." For Geoffrey Hamilton was the one confidant in the folly that had blighted Keith's life.

A stately butler opened the door of Prince's

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Gate and stared askance at the bearded, sun-burnt man, travel-stained and dusty, his clothes badly cut and ill-fitting. Johnson knew what was due to his master's importance, and was becomingly shocked at the intruder's boldness. "Sir Geoffrey Hamilton is at dinner," he replied, grimly, "and cannot possibly be disturbed."

"He will see me," returned Keith, calmly. "Show me into the library and tell him he is wanted on important business."

The commanding manner had its effect. Johnson obeyed, and contented himself with stationing a subordinate outside the library door to make sure the stranger did not make off with any of the art treasures contained therein.

Sir Geoffrey was still at the dinner-table, but the repast itself was concluded. The baronet was on the point of leaving the room to join his wife when the butler entered and delivered the message.

"A suspicious character, Johnson?" puzzled at the servant's description. "It's a strange time for one to come. Burglar, you say? Nonsense. They'd come when I was out, not boldly ask for me like this."

Johnson shrugged his shoulders and looked offended.

"You are right, of course, Sir Geoffrey," in a tone that meant "You are wrong," but I'm sure my late master, your lamented father, Sir Henry, whom I served for two-and-twenty years, would never have trusted such a character inside his house."

Geoffrey laughed. Johnson had the freedom of an old and valued servant. Time had changed the young baronet, but for the better. The dignities of husband and father had steadied him, and when he came some twelve months before into his inheritance he bore his honours well, very differently from what might have been expected of a companion of Lester D'Arcy.

"Well, it seems you have let him in," said Geoffrey to his old servant, pleasantly, "so I may as well see him. If he attempts to murder me I'll ring the bell. There are enough servants in the house to overpower one burglar, however desperate he may be."

In his faultless evening dress, the diamond studs gleaming in his shirt, a signet of untold value flashing on his finger, the baronet opened the library door. He saw an uncouthly clothed stranger walking up and down. The stranger advanced and held out his hand.

"Don't you know me, Geoff? How's Louise?"

"Why, it's Keith," wringing his hand until it ached again. "My dear fellow, you don't know the trouble you've caused us."

"If? How?"

"We took you for a burglar—that is, Johnson did. I was not quite sure from his description and came to see for myself. Welcome back to England."

"I suppose I do look rather an object. I have travelled night and day lately, Geoff, and as to dress, one doesn't study it much in the wilds of Norway."

"I take great credit to myself for knowing you at all," then changing his laughing tone and laying one hand upon the young man's shoulder. "Have you thought better of it, Keith, and come round to my way of thinking that there is no earthly reason for your staying away from your home and friends because of that boyish folly?"

"Boyish madness," corrected Keith, gravely. "No, my opinion will never change, Geoff. Had things been as they were I should never have come, not even if my father had been dying."

"You speak in the past," said Sir Geoffrey, anxiously; "you cannot mean that."

"I mean that I am free," interrupting him. "It has been a short probation after all, Geoff. Many men pay for their follies by life-long suffering, my trouble has not lasted quite five years."

"But years that have changed him as no ordinary ten years would have done," thought Sir Geoffrey to himself, then aloud, "Keith, nothing could have rejoiced me more. The whole affair has always lain heavy at my heart. When

I have heard Louise and the mother bewailing your absence I have felt like a traitor."

Keith threw himself into an easy chair.

"Tell me all the news, dear old boy, I have had very few letters. Wandering about as I have done I could not often give an address which would find me, and when I did sometimes the letters miscarried. Give me a little history of the five years—it is nearly five years, you know. You and Louise were only just married when I left England."

"To begin with ourselves," replied Sir Geoffrey, with a little pardonable egotism. "We are the jolliest couple in Belgravia. Louise makes the most charming hostess ever known. We have a son and heir—according to his mother, the most wonderful child existing; and there is a small Louise in the nursery, who will doubtless tyrannise some day over some unhappy man as much as her mother does over me."

"You look pretty well considering. And my mother?"

"Lady Jocelyn is the picture of health, looks younger every time I see her. She has but one trouble in life—the extraordinary disappearance from civilised countries of her only son."

Keith laughed in glad relief.

"She never need have that trouble again. Geoff, sometimes I ask myself if it is wicked to rejoice so much over any fellow creature's death."

"Not when they have done you so much wrong as that particular creature did you. Lord and Lady Jocelyn are in town, but you need not rush after them directly. They are gone to a ball at Marlborough House and won't be home for hours. We may fairly claim you this first evening."

"I wonder my mother cares for so much gaiety."

"Your mother comes to town for her daughter's sake, she says."

"Louise? Surely she does not need a chaperone?"

"My dear fellow, you are shockingly remiss. Have you forgotten you have another sister?"

"Maudie is a child."

"Maudie is a young lady of nineteen. You forget how time passes, my dear Keith. She is to be presented to-morrow."

"Goodness!"

"Your mother and Louise wished her to come out last year, but the young lady positively refused. She has a romantic attachment to an old friend of hers, Miss Devreux, and persisted in waiting until they could make their debut together."

Keith laughed.

"I remember that friendship of old. Ethel used almost to live at Jocelyn Manor; she was a pretty child, prettier than Maudie."

"Well, she is a beautiful girl now, and will probably make the best match of the season (Louise says, I don't study such things myself), and I should think she would not be very sorry, she can't have a very happy home of it at Devreux Court—Sir Claude hates her because she disappointed him of an heir."

"Poor child."

"She's not much to be pitied now. She is in town under your mother's auspices, and Lady Jocelyn pets her as much as she does Maudie."

The sound of many feet in the corridor outside, an ominous knock at the door, followed by the entrance of the worthy Mr. Johnson carrying one of his master's walking-sticks; the door being half open the gentlemen could see, to their great amusement, that the prudent butler was followed by three or four of the men-servants all similarly armed. Mr. Johnson valued his life highly, and did not lightly risk it in dangerous company.

"My lady is waiting tea, Sir Geoffrey," he said, with stately respect.

"All right, Johnson, you can go."

But Johnson showed not the slightest signs of going.

"Shall I tell her ladyship you are coming, sir?" Then in an audible aside, "I'm waiting to see the young man out safely, Sir Geoffrey. There are the hats and coats in the passage, to say nothing of my lady's fur cloak."

His earnestness was so very real it was impossible to be angry. Sir Geoffrey Hamilton, the most good-natured of masters, fairly laughed aloud.

"They're all safe, Johnson. Lay tea for three, and tell her ladyship I am bringing her a visitor."

Johnson's face would have been a fortune to an artist. Dismay, vexation, and fear were largely painted on it, but he had no resource but to withdraw. Just as he had reached the door Sir Geoffrey recalled him.

"Johnson."

"Yes, sir."

"Tell the housekeeper to have a room got ready. Mr. Jocelyn will sleep here to-night."

"Yes, sir," with a bewildered glance at Keith. "When do you expect him, sir? Shall the carriage go to the station to meet him?"

"I am Keith Jocelyn," said our hero, laughing. "It is not fair to perplex so excellent a retainer any longer. If ever you should go to the interior of Norway, Mr. Johnson, and pass months in complete solitude away from any shops, and then return to England, travelling night and day without stopping, I dare say you will resemble a burglar as nearly as I do."

"Yes, sir," said Johnson, more from force of habit than anything else.

Then he retreated to the passage, broke the news to his astonished subordinates, who instead of laughing at him made common cause with him, and then and there registered vows that if ever they served a master who announced his intention of transporting his household to the interior of Norway, they would that very instant give notice, even if he were a duke.

"There's no place like England," cried Mr. Johnson, waxing eloquent in the servants' hall over the evening meal. "Look at my lady, who looks fit to be a duchess, and then at this Mr. Jocelyn, whom I took to be a burglar. Why, no one'd ever believe they was brother and sister!"

"No one!" repeated a sympathising chorus. Sir Geoffrey Hamilton led his guest upstairs to a pretty apartment hung with pale blue satin and white lace.

"It is a whim of my lady's that the drawing-room looks a wilderness with only two people in it, so we generally have tea here. Where has she gone? Lulu," raising his voice, "I want you."

From another door Lady Hamilton entered. She had been a pretty girl, she was now an elegant woman. A strange remorse came over Keith as he looked at the husband and wife in their perfect happiness. He had often doubted Geoffrey's steadiness and domesticity; now here he was a devoted husband, the respected, esteemed master of a house, a member of the House of Commons, and a useful member of society. This was what four years had done for him. Keith had spent them like a vagabond in wandering to and fro upon the face of the earth.

"Your brother has come home, darling," said her husband to Lady Hamilton. "Don't faint, he's quite well, and there's nothing to be alarmed at."

Lady Hamilton looked up. Shabby, ill-made clothes could not deceive her. In another minute she was in Keith's arms.

"Why did you stay away so long?" she asked, reproachfully, when the first greetings were over and the two were seated round the fire, which the chill of early spring rendered agreeable.

"Another cup of tea, Lulu," cried her husband, striving to create a diversion and spare Keith the question he could not answer.

Lulu dutifully ministered to her lord and master's requirements, but then she returned to the charge.

"It has troubled mamma so, Keith. I think if you had only seen her sad face you must have come home."

"I am here now, dear," said Keith, with a strange gravity in his voice, "and I have come back to stay, Louise. I shall never be a wanderer again."

"We must find you a nice wife," said his pretty sister. "You will never be safely tied to England until you are married."

Keith dropped his teaspoon with a clatter and stooped to pick it up, so that Lady Hamilton could not see the effect her words had upon him.

"You recommend matrimony then, Lulu," he said, lightly. "With your great experience you ought to be quite an authority."

"She is an authority," said Sir Geoffrey, comically. "You see before you, Keith, the despot of the house. I am nobody."

"You look very well considering."

"Yes," said Lulu, lightly; "no one believes his grumblings. I don't think he believes them himself."

Keith was very sure of it, seeing the baronet's smile as he glanced at his young wife.

"And what shall you do, Keith, now you have come home? Stay in London and go through the season; mamma would be delighted."

"My dear, don't make demands on his time," said Geoffrey, seriously. "He has one duty of the most paramount importance."

"What is it?"

"He must go to Poole, or some other decent fellow, and get made to look more himself. Do you know, Lulu, Johnson took him for a burglar? Ah, Keith, you ran a narrow escape of being ordered off the premises like a suspicious character."

Keith smiled and stroked his beard fondly. It had been his companion in many adventures. He supposed he should have to sacrifice it on the altar of social prejudice.

"Decidedly," decreed Lady Hamilton. "No one under thirty wears a beard, unless as a disguise. You don't want to hide your identity, do you, Keith?"

For the last four years he had made it the business of his life to do so, but he said nothing of this, only promised his sister to give up his beard and to appear at her ball the following week so much like other people that it would be impossible to repeat Johnson's absurd mistake. He rose then almost abruptly.

"You must sleep here," cried his brother-in-law. "I have ordered them to get a room ready. You would see no one but the two children if you went to Cadogan Street."

Lady Hamilton looked up startled.

"What do you mean, Geof? There are no children at Cadogan Street."

"My dear, our traveller cannot understand the ravages and changes of time. He expects to find Maudie and Miss Devereux the same children they were on our wedding day. I shouldn't wonder if he has a doll apiece and a lot of chocolate creams stowed away among his luggage for them. By the way, where is your luggage, Keith?"

"At the station."

"They are anything but children, I can assure you," said Lady Hamilton. "Maudie is taller than I am, and Ethel is a beauty."

"I hate beauties," declared Keith.

"Well, you mustn't hate Ethel or you'll break everyone's heart. She is a kind of adopted daughter at Jocelyn; they all love her as such. You must try and look on her as a sort of ready-made sister."

"But I have two of my own."

"Yes, well, endure a third. If you really mean to go to Cadogan Street perhaps you'd better start now or the girls will be gone to bed. As to mother she's an utter impossibility for tonight, as she will be late at the ball. How she will lament over missing you, but you know, dear, you've stolen a march on us."

"A welcome march I hope."

"Can you doubt it? Oh, Keith, aren't you glad to be back again in dear old England?"

And Keith answered, simply:

"Yes."

If he could have foreseen the bitter agony and passionate sorrow coming to him through his return his reply might have been different. We say might purposely, for there was a wild joy strangely mingled with that sorrow, a few moments' intense happiness the anguish could not dim.

Sir Geoffrey would willingly have accompanied his brother-in-law to Cadogan Street, but Keith elected to go alone. Somehow he felt he could

parry the questions respecting his long absence better if the only friend who knew its true cause was not present. The baronet was very quick to read people's motives, and he thoroughly understood Keith's refusal.

The old servants at Cadogan Street were not so deceived as the worthy Mr. Johnson, they recognised the young master at once.

"If only my mistress were at home," said one, a grey-haired man who had been in attendance at Keith's christening. "Oh, sir, you have been sorely missed."

Keith wrung the faithful servant's hand.

"My roivings are all ended now. Can I see my sister?"

In their joy the servants would have liked to marshal him in all state to the drawing-room and then make the announcement pompously to their young lady, but Keith refused.

"No, I will go myself. Where is Miss Maude?"

"In the old school-room, Mr. Keith."

He remembered the room well. This was no hired house, but the London mansion of the Jocelyns. He knew the rambling apartment at the back which had once been sacred to his playthings and later on to Maude's dolls, before she went to Madame Dulcie's establishment at Kilburn. No need for anyone to show him the way.

He did not knock at the door, he opened it noiselessly, and advanced so quietly that neither of the inmates heard him. Two girls sat at the long table, between them a basin of water over which their faces were bent in earnest consultation.

"Surely they cannot be blowing bubbles," thought Keith.

But no. Looking more closely he saw that Maude held in her hand a spoonful of some substance she was carefully melting over a candle.

"It is all ready. Come, Ethel."

"I cannot," said the other, with a half-shudder. "I am afraid."

"You little goose, don't you want to know your fortune?"

"Melted lead won't tell it to me I am afraid."

Miss Jocelyn calmly proceeded to tempt fate on her own account. Never had melted lead been more carefully watched. Keith looked on, wondering what they would interpret by the (as it seemed to him) shapeless mass in the water.

"A wreath of flowers," cried Ethel, "can it be roses?"

"Orange blossoms," suggested Keith, boldly stepping forward.

Maude gave a little scream, but Ethel whispered:

"Hush, dear, it is your brother."

Then as the two exchanged a warm embrace she stood a little apart as one who had no share in their joy.

She was very beautiful. Belgravia would see no fairer face that season than hers. It was not merely her perfect features, her tender expression and bright eyes, there was a nameless purity, a world of strength about her face.

"A girl men would risk their lives for," an old general had said of her a day before, and she deserved the verdict.

"Keith," said Maude, presently, "do you remember Ethel?"

"Is it really my little friend of other days?"

Their hands met, she raised her eyes to his face, but something she met there made her lower them again.

"I am very glad you have come back, Mr. Jocelyn, they have all missed you so."

And of all the welcomes he received that was the one which lingered most in Keith's mind.

Afterwards in the dark days that followed he loved to recall that evening, in spite of the exquisite pain the recollection brought him. He always thought of Ethel Devereux as he saw her first in a plain blue cashmere, her lovely face serene and untroubled as a child's.

Heaven help him. It would be his part to do the troubling of it—he who would fain have saved her all pain. She was one of the two who would struggle for his heart, and she would suffer in the struggle.

But they knew not the future; no thought of it came to disturb them as they sat in the old school-room over the fire that the same night Rosalie made her compact with Count Rosai.

(To be Continued.)

SCIENCE.

THE ELECTRIC RAILWAY.—Messrs. Siemens and Halske's new electric railway is now running between Lichterfelde and the Cadettenhaus, about six miles from Berlin. The trial is stated to have been most successful. It was in a simple tramcar, with an electric battery totally concealed between the wheels, in connection, through the rails it ran on, with the principal battery at the station. The rails are 3ft. 3in. apart, and exactly resemble those of an ordinary railroad, only the gauge being narrower. The greatest speed obtained on a distance of about one and a half mile was eighteen English miles an hour. Dr. Siemens has proved that if necessary a far greater speed could be obtained, but this is not allowed by the German police authorities. It will not be allowed to proceed at more than nine miles an hour.

WIND ON THE SUN AND EARTH.—In a letter to "La Nature" M. Cornillon states that when observing the sun lately with a telescope he was struck with certain undulatory movements on the disk. On inquiry into their cause he is led to connect them with the wind blowing on the earth's surface at the time. They vary in intensity with this, and they have generally (but not always) the same direction as the wind. Where they have a different direction they indicate a change of weather, or at least the direction of the wind next day.

A NOVEL USE FOR THE MICROPHONE.—A certain Count Hugo von Engenberg, of Tratzberg, near Hall, in the Tyrol, is making use of microphones, sunk in the ground on the declivity of a hill, and connected separately with a single telephone and a small battery, to discover a source of water for his castle. He intends to conduct the experiment by night when disturbing sounds and vibrations of the ground are less frequent than by day. If a stream of water flows near the apparatus it will pass the sound to the telephone and thus reveal the spring.

TELEGRAPHY IN THE HANDS OF THE PUBLIC.—A system has been introduced in America which, if it finds favour with business men, will render a much cheaper telegram tariff possible. A new American high-speed transmitter has been adopted, by means of which messages can be transmitted twice as fast as by the Wheatstone apparatus. The perforations are made in a double line on the ribbon instead of a single line, and it is claimed that this not only renders it possible to transmit messages in half the time previously required, but makes the message so compact that the "slip" can be read at the rate of 100 words a minute instead of thirty, as formerly. The company who have been working in America with this high-speed apparatus state that on a single line between New York and Boston they have succeeded in disposing of 1,200 telegrams in an hour. These circumstances have rendered it possible to accept messages at a very much lower rate than that of the other companies, and they are now sending telegrams at 7½d. for twenty words, the names and addresses being transmitted gratuitously. The extreme simplicity of the Morse code, which enables anyone to master it in a few weeks, has suggested the idea of introducing a perforator of simple construction for business men, who can thereby have their own telegraph clerk to punch the slip, which is then taken to the telegraph office, where it is charged at so much a yard, and on receipt at the other end the printed slip is delivered to the addressee, whose clerk translates it again, the company having nothing to do but to transmit it from one station to the other. This renders extremely cheap telegraphy possible and avoids many sources of error.

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[AT HER MERCY.]

A WINSOME WIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"From Her Own Lips," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XL.

MY LADY'S MAID.

A very pattern sage and staid
Of all her sex—a model maid.

THERE was no blither lady in all the land, no gayer mistress of an old home and a fair domain, than the new lady of Petronel.

A little puzzling at first to the villagers, who had seen her before, and who believed her dead, and a study to her servants, who were some time making up their minds whether they would render her the unmixed homage which had been the due of all the Petronel ladies.

She managed them all with consummate skill when she went down with her husband after the season was over, and the London world had come to regard her as one of themselves, and ceased to be astonished at her audacity and her loveliness.

Lady Thistlethwaite had not taken Mr. Treherne's advice, for she had been entirely bewitched by the splendour of her former companion, and even Sir Ephraim, most inert of men in a general way as far as expressing his likes and dislikes was concerned, was entranced by her frankness and brilliance.

"Still it would be well to take care," he said to his wife one day when the good lady had been going into ecstasies over a proposed visit to Petronel, "if she really is an adventuress, and Mr. Treherne seems to intimate as much."

"Don't you be an old goose," was his wife's reply. "How can a person be an adventuress when her antecedents are known? and there is

no secret about hers. She deceived us, certainly, but she has explained all that, and—"

"And she is just as likely to be deceiving other people. I don't say she is, but be on your guard, and don't be more than an ordinary acquaintance of her ladyship's. There's no occasion to rush into friendship with her because she sees fit to be civil to you. Depend on it Mr. Treherne did not speak without some good reason. She was his nephew's widow, and he may have some information concerning her that we know nothing of."

"You are always so suspicious. Mr. Treherne's nephew ran away from her with some woman and left her to get along as she could. His death was a just retribution."

"H'm, I don't know," was all Sir Ephraim would say in reply, and his wife did not again revert to the subject.

She did not mention Stella again to Mr. Treherne, whom she saw only once before she was told he had gone out of town, and his invalid guest with him. They had taken the trusty servant with them, and were said to be at some out-of-the-way watering-place enjoying themselves in quietude.

No one wondered. It was a way of the eccentric old bachelor to abjure his kind every now and then. And in the meantime the season came to an end, and the fashionable world flitted away to the resorts they held dear for autumn and winter.

Stella made herself most popular in the village at her husband's gates. The poor had never had so generous a lady to cater for their wants, and the earl was only too glad to do anything to give her pleasure.

So the children were fed, and the old folks clothed and comforted, and struggling people helped, and they were very grateful, while they wondered at it all and thought the somewhat rude and haughty young lady who had formerly lived at The Nest and treated them all round with such supercilious carelessness must surely have been transformed somehow to have become such a patient listener to all their troubles and

such a bounteous distributor of all the good things of this life.

To Dick Wild's mother she paid one of her first visits. She was not going to have the woman talking about her if by any chance Dick had told her of his Glasgow experiences, which, in truth, he had when the news of the earl's marriage astonished him so much that he could hold his tongue no longer.

"Dick did me good service once, Mrs. Wild," she said, in her sweetest manner. "I never thought then to be here as I am to-day."

"I daresay not, my lady," Mrs. Wild replied. "Things come to us very unexpectedly sometimes. It was a surprise to Dick to see you alive."

"Yes. I was supposed to be dead, was I not?"

"Yes, my lady."

"It was a cruel plot—a wicked wrong," the countess said, bitterly. "I was a miserable, ill-used woman then. But that is all past. If there is anything in which I can serve you, Mrs. Wild, you must let me know."

Mrs. Wild thanked her ladyship, but said she was doing very well, and in a tone that plainly intimated that she was not likely to ask any favours at the hand of her son's friend.

"There's something crooked in it all," she said to herself. "I can't see what it is, but maybe others can. I shall feel more independent by-and-bye if I take nothing from my lady's hand now. She is very lovely, but there is no innocence in her beauty."

Perhaps Mrs. Wild had her own ideas on the subject of female loveliness, for everyone else asserted that the innocence in Stella's face was its great charm. She was so pure-looking, all her friends declared, and Mrs. Wild's opinion was certainly in a minority.

Matters were in this pleasant state when Lady Carita and her husband came home for Christmas, happy and joyous-looking, and seeing the world through the rose-coloured spectacles that Cupid provides for his votaries.

Their honeymoon was by no means over. It

never would be over, they said. Leonard Warburton declared that he loved his wife more and more every day, and Carita admitted that every week that they had passed abroad had been happier than the last.

Leonard, doubtful though he was, could not but be satisfied with the state of things. He could see no trace of care in his friend's face, and Stella was as bewitching as ever. Even Lady Beckenham had no fault to find.

"I wish I had," she said. "It is wicked to say such a thing, but I do, because the fault is there, and it will come out some day, and then my poor Arthur; it will break his heart—just that, and I shall be powerless to avert the blow."

"But, dear auntie, what makes you think any blow is coming?" Carita asked, thinking her ladyship was growing a little fanciful and letting morbid ideas get hold of her.

"Child, I can hardly tell you, but she is, or has been, paying hush money to someone."

"Hush money?"

It was Leonard who echoed Lady Beckenham's words. The idea had more meaning for him than for his wife.

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"I got at the information in many ways. The housekeeper told me of a man she had never seen the like of, whom the countess insisted on having up into her dressing-room. The night of your wedding it was; Arthur had gone to his club, and I was in bed quite knocked up. The old lady was afraid of him, and spoke her mind pretty plainly to my lady's maid."

"And she explained?"

"Oh, yes, and said she should tell Arthur, and she did, but what she told him no one knows but himself; but the very next day—"

"Well, what?"

"He gave her a thousand pounds!"

"He is infatuated enough to give her anything. I do not see that that fact tells against her. She owed it probably."

"No, she did not; she took it to the East End of London somewhere directly she got it. Someone has a hold on her. There is some horrible secret to come to light concerning her you will see some day."

"I hope not; I hope we shall see nothing but that she is a vain, ambitious little woman, as I have always thought her," Leonard Warburton said. "She would hardly dare to pay away such a sum in the way you describe, this notes could be traced."

"She did it," persisted Lady Beckenham; and they argued the point with her no more.

Mr. Warburton said nothing about it, but he did not forget it, and thought a great deal about it without being able to come to any satisfactory conclusion concerning it.

Lady Carita and her sister-in-law were on very good terms. Indeed, Stella made it impossible for anyone to quarrel with her; she would not take offence at anything, and she gave none.

One day the sisters were sitting together when a servant came in with a note for the countess.

"The person is waiting for an answer, my lady," he said.

With a word to Lady Carita Stella opened and glanced at the contents. They were short and not very remarkable.

"The woman who wept over the grave of Noel Treherne in the cemetery of St. A. Malis desires to speak to the Countess of Petronel. Her ladyship will do well to accede to her wishes. She will wait at the inn in the village for an hour."

There was nothing terrible in the words, yet every vestige of colour died out of Lady Toronto's lips and cheeks as she read them a second time, and it was only with an effort that she forced herself to speak to the waiting servant.

"Say I will be there in half an hour," she said; and Lady Carita looked up surprised at the husky voice and the weary tone.

"Has anything happened?" she asked.

"No."

"Are you going out?"

"Yes. Not far."

"But it is getting dark and it looks like snow. You let these people round here impose on you, I think."

"Oh, no, I don't. I shall take no harm. I go about the village at all hours."

"And I can't think how Arthur can let her," Carita said to her husband, who entered as Stella went out. "He never would let me wander like she does."

"He wasn't in love with you, you see," was Mr. Warburton's reply. "My lady may do anything with impunity it seems; but certainly this is not the pleasantest evening in the world for a rambler. Did she say where she was going?"

"No."

"It is narrowing in, I think," was all the further remark which Mr. Warburton made about the countess's walk; and his wife said no more on the subject either.

Meanwhile Stella was walking at a rapid pace across the park, hoping devoutly that her husband might not see her. She was not sure that he was not out, and to have met him just then would have been ruin. She would have had to tell him where she was going and the reason, and he would have insisted on accompanying her.

She was sick with fear, a horrible dread of which she alone was cognizant was clutching at her heart with an icy hand and making her sick and dizzy as she walked along.

But she met no one, and reached the village inn in safety, where she found a woman waiting for her, a woman not unlike herself in general appearance, but without her brilliancy of coloring—what she might look after years of hard living and care.

"Are you the person who sent for me?" she asked.

"Yes."

The woman looked at her, not exactly insolently, but like one who knew her power.

"What do you want?"

"Shall I tell you here or will you have my story where there can be no listeners? I think the last plan would be the best, Lady Toronto."

Stella inclined her head, she could not speak for a moment, and rang the bell.

"We will go upstairs, if you please, Mrs. Brooks," she said to the landlady, who entered, "this person has something to say to me."

They were shown into the best room in the house with much respect, and stayed there perhaps a quarter of an hour. The landlady tried her utmost to hear what their conversation might be about, but she could only catch a word here and there, till the end of the interview, when the stranger raised her voice a little.

"On that condition only, Lady Toronto," she heard her say, "that I am properly installed as your own maid in a month from this time. If you play me false I shall speak."

"I shall not play you false," said Stella, throwing the door wide open and speaking in her usual voice—perhaps she guessed there had been someone trying to listen. "I will manage it," Mrs. Brooks, see that this young woman has everything she wants and is properly attended to. Send the bill to me."

"Yes, my lady. And what has this young woman done to her, I wonder?" she said to herself, as Stella walked away. "She's as white as a corpse and looks as if she was frightened out of her wits. There's more in this young woman's coming here than anyone knows of. She'll be more than her maid if she does go to her, or my name's not Brooks."

CHAPTER XLII.

SHADOWS.

By the Apostle Paul, shadows tonight.
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard.
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers.

"I don't know what it is, my lady, but I can never please her now. Everything I do is wrong."

"Are you not a little fanciful, Rachel?"

"No, my lady. I don't think I am. I do everything as I used to, and it is all different somehow. She says we don't suit each other now and we had better part."

"Perhaps it would be better. If Lady Toronto does send you away you can come to me if you like. My service will be very different from what hers has been, but your duties will be light."

The speakers were Lady Carita Warburton and the girl who had officiated as "own maid" to Stella since her elevation to the dignity of Lady of Petronel. She had chosen the girl because she thought she could do as she chose with her, rather than for her superexcellent qualities as a maid, and so far all had gone on swimmingly.

Now however she had somewhat suddenly discovered that Rachel did not suit her and found fault with everything the girl did—there was reason in it doubtless, there was reason in everything she did—but to those who were not in the secret of her interview with the woman who had sent for her to the Petronel Arms that winter's night, her conduct seemed capricious, to say the least of it.

"I am glad you think you can take her," she said to her sister-in-law when the latter spoke to her about Rachel and her troubles. "I do want to get rid of her, and that's a fact. Not because I dislike her, but because I want to put someone else in her place."

She was always so avowedly ingenuous, this golden-haired Stella. She never concealed anything she did, and disarmed criticism by being always the first to speak of anything that anyone else could possibly cavil at.

"But why if you like her?" Lady Carita asked.

"Because I want to do an old acquaintance a service, that is all. Ah, Carita, dear, you have always lived in the purple, and you can't understand how many old acquaintances crop up at inconvenient times and want helping. In my own struggling days I knew this woman was a first-class maid, and to tell the truth Rachel was rather a mistake. She is a nice girl, but she is not experienced. I have had to depend on myself pretty much since I have had her. Are you sure she will suit you?"

"Quite, if she is honest and tidy."

"She is. As good a girl as ever lived. Don't think me capricious, Carita. Indeed it is not that. If you can take Rachel I shall be very glad, or find her a place. I will give her the best of characters."

"I don't think you would be unjust," Carita said, gravely, "and I will take Rachel if she will be contented with a quiet service like mine. I shall not need to ask you for a character with her. I know what she has been to you."

Rachel was only too glad to exchange the service of Lady Toronto for that of her sister-in-law, though she could give no definite reason for her preference.

"I liked Lady Toronto," she said, when her new mistress questioned her. "She was never unkind, and she gave me a great many things, but she frightened me."

"Frightened you, Rachel?"

"Yes, my lady, she did. She was always doing mysterious things, and she has something on her mind, I know she has. I would far rather be with you on half the wages."

Rachel was fanciful no doubt, but Carita had her misgivings, and thought too that her beautiful sister-in-law had something on her mind, some secret source of fear, which ever and anon would blanch her cheek and set her nerves quivering, but of which she never spoke.

The new maid arrived in due course, and a sufficient excuse was made to the earl and Lady Beckenham for the change. The former thought everything right that his wife chose to do, and the latter shrugged her shoulders and said she had long left off trying to understand her nephew's wife. She thought the neat, quiet Rachel a far preferable person to this somewhat loud-spoken woman, who might know her business very well indeed but who was not parti-

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cularly polite to her, and who seemed to have some hidden influence over her mistress.

There was no lack of taste, and she seemed to understand all the requisites of her station, but Lady Beckenham felt half afraid of her, and the other servants positively hated her. She gave herself airs and had not the sense to be silent as to the power she had over her mistress.

"She knew me when she was not Lady Toronto," she said to some of them, "and that is why she has taken me on now. She does not forget old friends, the countess doesn't, and she has good cause to remember Mathilde Duvernay."

That was the name she had chosen to give herself and to announce herself as a French woman, though there was not the slightest thing about her to give credit to her words. Her French was execrable and her manners certainly not those of any part of that fair nation. She seemed to have been brought up amongst the most commonplace, of the middle or lower class, and to have nothing to recommend her but her knowledge of the duties of a lady's-maid; that she had served in that capacity before was beyond a doubt, but every word she spoke concerning her former knowledge of her mistress was a lie. Stella had never seen her till the hour when she stood face to face with her in the village inn, and she would have given the world and all in it to have wiped out any knowledge of her now.

Her place was not like service at all. She did as she pleased, went in and out as she liked, and made herself so generally obnoxious that Lady Beckenham at length spoke to her nephew on the subject.

"My dear auntie, I never interfere with the servants," he said, in some surprise, after he had listened to a tirade about Mathilde Duvernay's peccadilloes. "I suppose she suits Stella or she would not keep her."

"She seems blind to all the woman's faults, and she is a horrid creature, Arthur. I should not be surprised if all the rest of the upper servants gave warning and left because of her."

"That would be a dreadful state of things. But what have you to bring against her in particular?"

"She drinks."

"Nonsense!"

"She does. I had occasion to speak to her somewhat suddenly only yesterday, when she thought there was no one near, and she could hardly answer me. Stella was out, as you know."

"I hope you are mistaken. I could not put up with that in anyone about my wife. I will speak to Stella about it."

"And I hope you will have some influence with her, she won't listen to anything I say. She says that Mathilde—her name's no more Mathilde than mine is—is a capital maid, and that if other servants would let her alone we should have no more of her tempers. She is either infatuated with the woman or afraid of her."

"Auntie, you have stumbled on a mare's nest. Why should Stella be afraid of her maid?"

"It is for her to say why, Arthur. That she is afraid of her I have seen ever since she came here."

It was a curious thing for the earl to hear, and he thought of it many times after his interview with his aunt. It seemed to his loyal love that it would be an insult to his wife to ask her point blank if the queer story was true. She was so open, so perfectly frank in all her intercourse with him that he could not seem to doubt her in any way. The revelation was to come to him all too soon and turn the light and trust of his life into blackness and suspicion for ever.

The ladies of his family were out at some merry-making at the house of their nearest neighbour, and he was to join them later on in the evening. Many of the servants were out also, a holiday having been granted them before the work of the Christmas festivities began.

The year was drawing to a close now, and Petronel was to be full of gay guests for the

festive time. Going into his wife's boudoir to find something, he wanted, he was surprised to see the lady's-maid there lounging about as if she had a perfect right to the room and all it contained. She did not even rise at his entrance, and he faced her angrily, for her manner annoyed him.

"What are you doing here now?" he asked.

"Something for my lady," she replied, insolently.

And he saw at once that the woman had been drinking.

"Aunt then was right," he said to himself. "It was no fancy of hers."

"You will be good enough to leave the room," he said, quietly, resolving that the new maid should go at once. "You are in no fit state to be here. I am sorry to find that the reports I have heard concerning you are true."

"And what have you heard, pray?" she asked, with an insolent leer. "Has your wife dared—"

"Leave your lady's name out of the question, if you please," said the earl, with blazing eyes, thoroughly roused now by the woman's insolence. "I cannot think how ever she came to engage a person of your habits, nor who gave you a character that would recommend you to her."

"I needed no character to come to the Countess of Toronto," the lady's-maid said, with a sneer. "She was only too glad to take me. She knew my worth."

"She must have a singular idea of worth. Leave the room, if you please. You will not stay in this house longer than is necessary for you to pack your boxes. However clever you may be as a lady's-maid I cannot tolerate drunkenness and insolence. Do you hear me? Go."

"Yes, I hear you, Lord Toronto, and I will go, but I think you will come to repent the day when you came between me and your wife. Think better of it. I am necessary to her, more necessary to her than you have any idea of."

"I will not leave you to judge of that. You will go."

"Yes, I will go," the woman replied, and the words seemed to hiss as they came out of her shapely mouth, "and I will leave you the bitterest legacy that ever was bestowed on man—the reason for my being here at all."

She was certainly intoxicated, or she would never have gone so far, but she seemed to glory in what she was doing and to gloat over the mischief she was about to make.

"It might be as well if I knew," the earl said, quietly. "I should know better how to deal with you in that case."

"You will be more anxious for me to stay at Petronel than ever your wife was to have me here or I was to come," she said, slowly, "when you know who I am. Listen, my lord. I am the woman who was talked of in the newspapers as having wept over the grave of Noel Treherne after that awful railway accident, the shameless creature he was said to have left his wife and fled with. The papers lied, society lied. I did not fly with him; he was not there. I was grieving for the man they laid in the grave on that dreadful day. But it was not Noel Treherne—he does not lie in that St. Amalie churchyard, and your wife knows it!"

Arthur Petronel stared blankly at the speaker as if he could only partially grasp her words.

"I—I don't think I understand you," he gasped, after a pause. "There is some mistake."

"There is none. Every word I have stated is the literal truth, my lord."

"But he was identified, and his luggage—"

"Was stolen by the man whom I mourned—whom I shall mourn till the grave closes over me too. I am a wicked woman, but I loved him dearly. No one could have identified the body; Mr. Treherne's valet could only swear to the clothes, they had been taken out of the box about which Mrs. Treherne was so troubled when she made her first journey alone without the husband who had disappeared before that railway accident, which has fixed a wicked stain on a dead man's character. Now, my lord, do you wish me to leave at once? Shall I carry my story

elsewhere, or would you like me to keep at Petronel and help you to keep it from the rest of them?"

CHAPTER XLII.

THROUGH DEEP WATERS.

The lady's cheek
Trembled; she said nothing, but pale and meek
Arose and knelt before him—wept a rain
Of sorrows at his words.

THE earl stayed the woman as she would have swept out of the room with a gesture of his hand.

"Wait a little," he said, "I must have some further explanation of this, if it be as you say."

"It is as I say. I tell you that no one of the name of Noel Treherne was the owner of the luggage that was claimed by the servant who came to bury him. The things that were identified had been his, doubtless, but he was not the man who was killed when in possession of them."

"I hardly know how to credit what you are saying," Arthur Petronel replied. "Do you know what you are doing in telling me all this? You are rendering yourself amenable to the law for theft and conspiracy."

"There was no conspiracy," she said, shortly, "and the theft was not mine. You have surprised my secret, my lord, or rather drawn it from me by insulting words. It is as well you should be prepared; and I don't think you will give me up to whatever you think justice will do to me, for the sake of your wife's good name and your own honour."

His wife's good name! The words seemed to burn into his brain as he heard them. Was it possible that he, the master of Petronel, should sit there and listen to such words from a stranger's lips? Could it be that anything could soil his darling—any breath of slander come near her?—his own ingenuous, open-hearted Stella, who told him everything that happened to her, and laid bare for him every thought of her innocent soul?

No; it was impossible; he would not believe it. This woman was making some blunder. Noel Treherne had gone to France. In that awful accident there might have been some muddle made, but his friends knew him to be dead and his servant had seen his remains.

Stella had told him with her head on his breast and the tears in her eyes how her husband had abandoned her, and how wretched and forlorn she had been, till she had made her way to America through the chance of getting the situation at Lady Thistlethwaite's.

He had heard all about the shawl and how she had mystified the elder Mr. Treherne, and he had asked her why she had not acknowledged then she was Noel's widow. She had said in her pretty way that everybody seemed so unkind, and the old man so suspicious and cold, that she had rather enjoyed mystifying him, especially as she knew then that her husband had been with another woman when he was killed.

The story had been drawn from her by bits; she had been very unwilling to speak of that time at all, and her husband loved her all the better for what he thought her gentle reticence about the dead man.

Could it be that it was all false, and that Stella herself was the lying creature that this woman's story would make her out to be? Ah, no! He would not believe it. It was impossible; she had concealed nothing of her past life from him. He knew all about her from the time when he heard her singing in the streets at Ayr and left his foolish heart in her keeping.

Still there was an earnest air about this strange lady's-maid; she did not seem like a person who was telling a lie, drunk though she had been when she began to speak. Her subject had sobered her, she was herself now, somewhat angry with herself for her foolishness in betraying her secret, but ready to swear to her words if need be.

"I am to be bought, Lord Toronto," she said, looking keenly at him. "There is a secret in

your wife's life, and I guess at it if I do not know it quite correctly. Ask her what she was doing on a wild moor in East Cornwall on the day of a certain thunderstorm last summer twelvemonths. If she can look you in the face while she answers that question I shall think that in very deed I have blundered, and that my own story is all a dream."

East Cornwall! A strange, eerie feeling came over the earl as he remembered the evening before Carita's wedding, when Stella had startled them all by fainting away. East Cornwall and a thunderstorm had been their topic of conversation then, and she had asserted somewhat vehemently that she had never been there. What awful shadow was this woman's hand flinging over her life? It was too horrible.

"Will you please be explicit?" he said. "I am still in the dark. My wife has never been to Cornwall that I know of."

"Just so—that you know of. She has been there. The man who was killed at St. Amalie, my—"

"Your husband?"

"Yes, in Heaven's sight," Mathilde Duvernay said, fiercely; "for surely no wife ever loved husband as I loved him. He was my husband as much as if all the priests in Christendom had joined our hands. He was engaged thereabouts—a driver he was—and the day of that storm he drove a lady from the foot of the mountain there to St. Neots. She told him she had somehow missed her companions in the storm. They would know where to find her if she got to the town, and she paid him liberally for what he did. Our plans for leaving the country were made then. We were going to the south of France the very next day, and that was how the robbery of the box came about."

"And where did that happen, pray?"

"At Plymouth station; but I need not tell you about that. It was accomplished, and the lady to whom it belonged was the same one who hailed my Harry all wet and terrified on that wild moor. I've heard of her since, Lord Toronto. I made it my business to find out what became of her, and it was easy from the fuss she made about the lost box. She was Miss Ada Durand when she inquired everywhere for it. She is Countess of Toronto now."

"I know my wife's past history," the earl said. "There is no need for you to go into that subject now. All you have said up to this point has proved nothing but the fact, if fact it be, that Lady Toronto was in Cornwall at a certain time."

"Would you like to hear any more, my lord?"

"Say all there is to be said, in Heaven's name," the earl said, wearily. "There is a blunder in it, of course; but I want to know how much of truth there is at the bottom of it before I investigate it for myself."

"If you are wise, my lord, and value your good name, you will bury it fathoms deep. It will not be for the honour of your house that it should be told. Why did you provoke me into speaking? It would have been better, maybe, if I had held my peace."

"Not so. I will have no slurs cast on the name of the Countess of Toronto that cannot be investigated to the very bottom. What else do you know?"

"As I told your lordship just now, I know nothing," was the quiet reply; "but I have been in Cornwall since then, and people in those primitive districts talk a good deal about what they do not quite understand. The night before that storm a gentleman and lady slept at an hotel in Liskeard, and engaged a man to drive them some distance into the country. They left the trap at a small inn and went to see some of the curiosities of the place. They have never been seen from that hour to this. Their driver thought they must have lost their way on the moor in the storm, but though he sought everywhere, and got the help of a half-wild man that knows every inch of the place, he could find no trace of them, and had to go back to Liskeard without them. That is one thing."

"And what else?"

"Only one thing more. That half-wild man, who was by no means so crazy as he seemed, has

come into a fortune and gone to America. He had no relations in the world to leave him money, not a friend to care whether he lived or died."

"And what do you infer from all this? What are you driving at?"

"I infer that since Noel Treherne did not die in the railway accident, and I can swear that it was not he whom they buried that day, that the surest place to look for him would be somewhere on that old moor, for the woman that my dead love drove away from there alone on that summer evening was your wife, Lady Toronto."

She spoke in a cold, hard tone, that made every word ring like the clang of steel, and Arthur Petronel felt as if he were turning to stone, not with any feeling that his wife was guilty of such a hideous crime as the words would seem to imply, but with very shame and disgust that such an accusation should be even inferred against her.

"Stop!" he said. "I have heard enough. I must think how best all this can be unravelled. There must be no tales like this going about. I have been very foolish to listen to you for so long. Leave me now, please."

"One thing more, my lord, and I have done. The man I speak of, the half-wild wanderer of that Cornish moor, has been at your house, and was admitted by your lady to her very dressing-room. Your servants will talk, and I recognised him from the description they gave of him. Perhaps his legacy came from her."

"No more—no more!" said the earl. "I cannot listen to it now. Go away, if you please. Lady Toronto herself will tell me all I want to know. You are mistaken at least about the man who visited her; I know who that was. I hope all the rest of your story will turn out as trivial."

"Am I to pack my boxes, my lord?"

"No, no—not to-night; to-morrow I will decide. I cannot have you here about my wife."

"As I said, I am to be bought," Mathilde Duvernay said, as she rose, sober and steady enough now, to leave the room. "If my lady can look you in the face and give my story the lie, she is a braver woman than I give her credit for being."

Arthur Petronel, left alone, put his hands to his head, feeling as if the world and all in it were coming to an end. Of course it was all a lie or a delusion—ay, that was it. The woman was a madwoman. They had had her under their roof to the danger of the household in innocence of the danger. She must be provided for at once; her wild stories could be due to nothing but madness.

Stella had said distinctly that she had never been in Cornwall. Why should she tell an untruth about it if she had?—his darling—alone, on a wild moor, wet and terrified! It was preposterous. He would ask her again all about the time between his loss of her and their happy meeting in the wilds of North America, and she would tell him the truth with her loving eyes looking straight into his, those eyes that never lied to him or anyone.

"Why, Arthur, what is the matter?"

The eyes were looking into his now, and Stella was standing before him, radiant in her loveliness, and with a look of purity and innocence in her face that well-nigh drove him mad to see when he thought how cruelly he had heard her slandered.

"My darling," he said, catching her in his arms and holding her tightly to him, "there is nothing the matter. What makes you think there is?"

"Your face," she replied. "I never, never saw you look so before; you looked almost death-stricken when I came into the room; it was awful."

"There's nothing awful, dear," he said, gently. He could not speak to her now, for he heard the voices of his aunt and sister in the hall. "I have been poring over some business matters, that is all. What brings you back—I thought I was to join you?"

"Lady Heatherton has sprained her ankle," Stella replied. "There was not time to let us know, it seems. Of course we all came away,

and I am not sorry, darling, for I am sure you are ill."

(To be Continued.)

FACETIÆ.

THE PROFESSION OF BEAUTY.

BUSINESS-LIKE MAMMA (to fashionable West End hostess): "Now, what would be your charge for exhibiting a couple of my daughter's photographs, with her name in full, in your window for a couple of months or so?" Punch.

PROVERBIAL ECONOMY.

THE increasing success of the scheme for receiving savings-bank deposits in postage stamps attests the sapience of the once if not still popular saying, "Penny-wise and pound-foolish." Another good old saw gone wrong. Punch.

A CONSCIOUS MARTYR.

"**WHY** are you so cross, Angela?"
"Oh! because I hate selfishness, aunt, and they're all of them so selfish!"
"What have they done?"

"Why, they all want to go on the river, just when I want to play lawn-tennis."

"Well, you needn't go with them."
"Of course I needn't, but how am I to play lawn-tennis all by myself?" Punch.

WHEN Shakespeare makes Othello allude to "the harmless necessary cat," the bard could not have had an Elizabethan boy's "Tip-cat" even in his mind's eye, or he wouldn't have called it "harmless." Punch.

A COLOURABLE CONCEIT.—Poets have described the Mediterranean as dark blue. Politicians are afraid that the occupation of Tunis will convert the "dark blue sea" into a French lake. Punch.

WHILE men gamble in stocks, women have been known to gambol in stockings.

A VEIL is a protection against the sun of heaven and the sons of earth.

WHY are balloons in the air like vagabonds? Because they have no visible means of support.

THE dog for a surgeon—A setter.

"**I THOUGHT** you took an interest in my welfare," said William. "No, sir," replied Susan "only in your farewell."

THE motto of the giraffe—Neck or nothing.

WHAT sport resembles young ladies gossiping?—Deer stalking.

A REASONABLE CON.

WHY is the year like an acrobat?—Because it executes a summer-sault from a spring-board. Fun.

THE WORRY OF MARRIED LIFE.

MR. GILES: "What be wrang, Lucy, lass? Thee's not lookin' well."

LUCY: "No; a'wm worried, Mr. Giles. My Jem, 'ee do get tipsy so often."

MR. GILES: "An' on'y been married six months. Dear, dear! now, a'wve ben married a mattrer of fifteen year, and oi bain't a drunkard yet!" Fun.

A DETACHMENT of the Royal Marines have left Chatham for duty in Ireland. The men are mostly young soldiers from the marine depot at Walmer. It strikes us they'll find it walmer still where they've gone to. Fun.

ALDERMANIC NOTE.—A civic banquet is the most gorge-ous affair in the world. Fun.

"CREDE COLORE."

WHEN may a man be said to be in the "blues"?—When he is in "purple"—exit. Fun.

THE GOOSE STEP.—Getting married. Judy.

THE UPPER CRUST.—Blacking. Moonshine.

SECOND SIGHT.

A CERTAIN Mr. Bishop has been astonishing sundry learned and scientific gentlemen by his power of reading their thoughts, and discovering, when blindfolded, objects which they have previously concealed. Can it be possible that anyone is simple enough to suppose that a bishop is deprived of his see because he is blindfolded? Fun.

FRANK.

"This letter I am writing to my dear, noble, handsome Frank might truly be called Frankincense," said a young lady, who was very far gone indeed.

A NEW VIEW OF THE LAND QUESTION.

ENGLISHMAN (arguing for the superiority of England): "But, my dear sir, you surely will allow that England is larger than Scotland."

SCOTCHMAN: "Larger? Not at all. Why, we have about twice as much land in Scotland as you have in England. We have had so much land in Scotland we've been obliged to make it up into hills and mountains to fit." Fun.

WETHER REPORTS.—Baa! Moonshine.

SPRING EXHIBITIONS.—Jumping at conclusions. Moonshine.

"FRESH FISH" AT THE BRIGHTON AQUARIUM.

A WIDE-GAB. Evidently a species of talking-fish.

Two nutmeg soles. The greater sort.
Long-nosed skate. For shame! As if this Kate, poor thing, could help her long nose.
Sea cucumbers. Ought to go with the salmon—eh?

A bellows fish. A puff-ect curiosity.
A glutinous hag. Peculiar "old stick."
Three band fish. Prepared for a sea-renade.
Two fiddle fish. Most likely a description of (double) basse.

A haddock. Why not have haddock-couple of 'em while they were were about it?
A drizzle. Would like to mizzle.
A little cross fish. Not (t)easy in its mind.
A tangle. Out of the tide at last.
A sea adder—just "cast up."
A scald-fish—in great e-steam.
A numb-fish. Rather a paradox this—only one, yet quite a numb-er. Funny-Folks.

FASHIONABLE ANOMALY.—A "hard rider" of the "softer" sex. Funny Folks.

EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT.—Seeing a man turn into a public-house. Funny Folks.

A TEA-GARDEN ATROCITY.

WHY is the letter "r" like strong vinegar?—Because it makes a wrinkle wrinkle. Funny Folks.

SUITABLE FOR A "BAND OF HOPE."—The "Music of the Future." Funny Folks.

SUCH A PROUD MOMENT TOO!

PROUD FATHER: "Oh—er—I wish to register the birth of a daughter." Funny Folks.

REGISTRAR: "No, no; you must go back, my boy, and tell your father to come himself!" Funny Folks.

TOO OFTEN "PIG-HEADED."—Sty-pendiary magistrates. Funny Folks.

LAW A MUSSY!

WE have read much lately about the "Law of Distress," but "distress" implies "necessity," and we have always understood that necessity had no "law!" Funny Folks.

MEDICAL journals tell a "horrible tale" of a fasting woman in New York who, desirous of following the example of Doctor Tanner, of unpleasant memory, abstained from food for forty-seven days, and then died of consumption. We should have thought death was occasioned by want of consumption. A happier termination of the fasting nuisance has taken place in the case of the so-called Scotch fasting girl. She was threatened with a lunatic asylum, whereupon she immediately fell to, as fast as possible, and ceased her fast. Perhaps the girl was

frightened that in the asylum she would be expected to eat double rations—to be supplied with food for a girl beside herself.

Moonshine.

THIS IS SCURI-OUS.

"SCURI, the Unicyclist," is doing wonders at the Alexandra upon a machine with only one wheel to it. Mr. O'Bull prophesies that if they go on at this rate, they'll soon be making bicycles without any wheels at all.

Funny Folks.

GRIFFITH'S HIGHEST VALUATION.—His opinion of himself. Funny Folks.

LINK BY LINK.

BY

A POPULAR AUTHOR.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I saw him watch with a dilating eye
The grisly terror that he feared draw nigh.

IN that large and lofty room, so handsome in its proportions, so luxurious in its furniture and appointments, which is yet a prison, wherein Sir Marmaduke Knollys, with gout for his jailer, is usually compelled to pass the live-long day, there is an expectant hush—so profound that the tick-tick-ticking of the clock upon the mantelpiece makes itself heard with startling distinctness.

The baronet, paralysed as usual by sudden emergency, has fallen back upon the silken cushions of his chair in a state of collapse. The lawyer looks from the scene amongst the geometrical flower-beds, the advancing foe, the retreating garrison, to the white, terror-stricken face upon the pillows.

He notes with observant shrewdness the helpless, fascinated horror visible in Sir Marmaduke's bloodshot eyes. Contempt for his client's cowardice is dashed with some slight astonishment at the extravagance of his client's fear.

"In five minutes this Philistine will be upon us," he says, flippantly.

And Sir Marmaduke's lips move with assent that is quite inaudible.

"Assume," continues the lawyer, "that those brave servants of yours, whose discretion appears to be so very much the better part of their valour, make a stand at last and prevent the adversary from actually entering this room, they cannot tie his tongue, or avert the scandal and exposure which you dread."

Again a noiseless parting of the bloodless lips, whilst upon the puffy, swollen features begins to settle the grim grey apathy of despair.

"There is only one way out of the difficulty. Not an easy one perhaps, or a pleasant way, or a way devoid of risk, but still a practicable one."

"Name it," cries the baronet, roused at once to eager hope. "Sharp, if you can help me now, my purse, my interest, my friendship, will be at your disposal as long as I live."

"Call him a lunatic and shut him up in an asylum."

"Impossible—quite impossible!"

"Not at all. All we shall require will be the signatures of a magistrate and of two doctors. You are a J.P. and can sign the order. I know a doctor who would lock up his own mother for a fifty-pound note, and a madhouse proprietor who asks no questions, and who never parts with a profitable patient, or permits the commissioners to suspect his sanity."

"How about the other doctor?"

Mr. Sharp crosses the room and pulls the bell-rope vigorously.

"In two seconds I will introduce him to you. Tell your man that you will see the gentleman who rode with me from the station; but remember when he appears your cue will be to maintain the silence of exhaustion."

The order is given. Sir Marmaduke's appre-

hensive gaze wanders amongst the flower-problems, done in gaudy colours upon a ground of sand, to where the invader has been momentarily checked by the army of defence. Then it comes back to find Doctor Tom Evans of Duffelpool salaaming in the doorway.

"Having one or two calls—aw—of a professional nature to make in the immediate neighbourhood of The Hall, I am presuming—aw—upon my slight services of two days since to inquire after the health of Sir Marmaduke Knollys," says Doctor Tom, in his grandest manner.

"I am glad to see you, sir," answers the baronet, in a feeble whisper.

"Permit me," cries Doctor Tom, advancing with joyful alacrity, and laying his finger upon the invalid's pulse. "Ah, ah! this will never do. Pulse's action—aw—both feeble and irregular, with a strong disposition—"

"A strong disposition to resent intrusion upon the quiet and privacy which my client's condition demands," interrupts Mr. Sharp, briskly. "If you will look out of the window, doctor, you will see—"

"The—aw—the maniac!" exclaims Doctor Tom.

"You may call him a maniac, I call him a trespasser," is the dry response. "Is he really mad?"

"Mad as a March hare, I should say," replies Doctor Tom, producing his tarnished snuff-box and extending it to his interrogator with one hand, whilst with the thumb and forefinger of the other he applies a mighty pinch to either nostril of his rubicund nose. "Why, sah, at the fête two days ago he conducted himself as no sane mortal could have done. Sir Marmaduke says he is harmless, but I—aw—I take the liberty to doubt the harmlessness of any lunatic, particularly of one who offers unprovoked violence to a stranger, as this man did to me. He ought to be in Hanwell."

"We will confer on that subject presently," says the lawyer, in a confidential undertone. "Meanwhile we must get him out of view from this window. You see the effect of unwholesome excitement, such as his appearance produces. Will you come with me, Doctor Evans, to persuade the madman that Sir Marmaduke is not well enough to bear the interview he probably desires?"

They go out, after a brief contest of politeness as to which shall precede the other—a contest initiated by the lawyer, who has gauged his companion's character during that half-hour's drive from the railway station as accurately as though he had made it the study of a life. He divines how dear are form and ceremony to the bibulous medico whose self-esteem is in inverse proportion to the respect he is now able to inspire. Like clay in the hands of the potter will be this pompous man of shabby exterior in the hands of the shrewd practitioner from Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Laying his hand upon Doctor Tom's threadbare coat-sleeve Mr. Sharp brings him to a stand for a few seconds in the great hall; amongst the stags' heads and the foxes' brushes, the cross-bows and the arquebuses, the modern statuary, and the ancient suits of mail.

"Sir Marmaduke knows very well, what your practised eye detected at a glance, that our friend in the garden is hopelessly insane," he whispers, still in a confidential undertone. "But the baronet entertains what I consider, *entre nous*, to be a prejudicial and unwarrantable aversion to public madhouses. We must make allowances for the whims and fancies of these great people, you know, doctor, although we may find it difficult to have patience with them."

"Certainly—aw—certainly, especially those of a confirmed invalid," assents Doctor Tom, graciously.

"I have therefore been suggesting that the lunatic should be lodged, at my client's expense, in a private asylum; where friends could have easy access to him, and where his happiness and comfort might be secured so far as money could do it. Now, my dear doctor, a word from you in your professional capacity would carry far more weight with Sir Marmaduke—"

"The word shall assuredly be spoken," answers Doctor Tom, with importance, offering a second pinch of snuff, which the lawyer accepts and carefully drops on its way to his nose.

"What is the meaning of this disturbance?" cries the latter, presently, in a tone of authority, when the two men have approached within earshot of the group of disputants. One of the stable-helpers begins to explain.

"We've got orders, sir, to perwent this here wagabone from marchin' about the grounds as though the place belonged to him."

"Fall back, all of you, thirty yards nearer the house," commands the lawyer, sharply.

"Now, sir, what is your business?"

"My business is to see Master 'Duke, and not a man-jack here shall stop me," answers Sir Blunt, in a deep bass growl of sullen defiance.

"I suppose it is not so immediately pressing but it can wait one day, or even two?" inquires the other, with suave politeness.

"Ay, ay, it can wait, seem' as it ha' waited twenty year already. I ain't so sure, though, as it will."

"Twenty years! He had a long interview with the baronet only two days ago," mutters Doctor Tom, in a musing tone.

"What's that to you, Grogblossoms?" cries Sir Blunt, fiercely, turning upon him eyes of baleful fire. "You had a hintervoo too, hadn't yer? and here you are again, come back like a bad penny."

"This gentleman had occasion to return," explains the solicitor, blandly. "Sir Marmaduke is very ill, so ill that he is at present quite unable to bear the excitement of seeing you. Doctor Evans is his medical adviser."

"It's a plant, a durned plant," growls Mr. Blunt, suspiciously. "Who are you?"

"I am Sir Marmaduke's lawyer."

"Then he must be ill, werry, werry ill, when two carrion crows—the doctor and the lawyer—have come round him to pick his bones. Haven't ye got a parson? There's mostly a parson about too at such times. I'll go and put on my suit of black, then there'll be three of us."

"There will be occasion both for a clergyman and an undertaker if you persist in creating harmful excitement," says the lawyer, impressively. "You must have seen yourself that my client's life is like a flickering lamp, which a puff of wind might extinguish. If you doubt my words and the evidence of your own senses, ask Doctor Evans, who will confirm the truth of what I say."

"Is it true?" asks Mr. Blunt, turning to Doctor Tom with an air of unwilling conviction. "Is it true? Durn ye both, I've had enough of lies. If yelle to me I'll throttle ye, and you'll never lie again."

"It is quite true," answers Doctor Tom, stepping back a few paces in angry alarm. "If you were to force your way at the present moment into my patient's presence I—aw—I would not answer for the consequences."

"Come again to-morrow," says the lawyer, persuasively. "If the baronet is well enough you shall be admitted, if not, you must wait a day or two, like other people. We have all to suffer inconveniences at times. I am sorry if the delay will greatly incommode you. Where are you stopping?"

"At the Knollys Arms," replies Mr. Blunt, rather more graciously. "Now look here—tell me this. Is there any fear of Master 'Duke kickin' the bucket between this and to-morrow same time?"

"Not if he be kept in perfect tranquillity," answers Doctor Tom, to whom, by a look, the lawyer refers the question.

"Werry well then. At this hour to-morrow precisely I shall come again, and next time I'll take no refusal. Grogblossoms there must bolster him up for the hintervoo, for see him I must and will, let the consequences be what they may."

Slowly, lingeringly, he moves away, and Sir Marmaduke, watching from the window, sees that once more the peril he dreads is averted.

"At this hour to-morrow, all being well, I trust you will find yourself in the care of experienced keepers, and on the road to a good private asylum," murmurs the lawyer, sotto voce. "Doctor Evans, your patient must not again be subjected to this disturbing influence. I presume that if we can induce Sir Marmaduke to sign the order you will not object to certify to the man's insanity?"

"It will be my duty—aw—to do so," replies Doctor Tom, with stately conviction. "I consider it a very dangerous case. For the safety—aw—of the community a lunatic ought not to remain at large."

The army of defence is disbanded. The doctor and the lawyer, chatting in amicable fashion, walk leisurely through the great hall, pausing here and there to examine trophies of war or of the chase until they find themselves again in Sir Marmaduke's room.

The position of the spacious chair is altered. It is evident that its occupant must have propelled it, by means of the lever-like handles, across the apartment until he was able to grasp the bell-rope. But the alarm he meant to raise has not been sounded. The rope remains still between his fingers; but his arm dangles helplessly over that of the chair, the hand with the bell-rope in it touching the floor. He is stretched at full length, rigid, motionless, his massive jaw resting upon his breast.

"Great Heaven!" cries the lawyer, "the man is dead!"

CHAPTER XIX.

A tricky sprite
Who charmed her love by contrariety.

"But no, it is for the present a thing entirely impossible."

Mademoiselle Millefleurs has been explaining, with many wavings of her small, white hands, and many shruggings of her shapely shoulders, and many tossings of her pretty head, that miladi, having in a moment of haste given her a congé, ill-considered and without cause, should desire to recall it, is credible and comme il faut. That she, Mademoiselle Millefleurs, resents not miladi's faux pas is proved by her willingness to remain after the expiration of the established congé of a month at miladi's request until miladi should have suited herself with a maid.

As the maid is not yet found (and to find a maid without fault is most difficult) mademoiselle will defer her engagements, and will attend upon miladi yet a few days until miladi, who, with Monsieur Chandos, goes tout de suite to Scarborough, that watering-place so charming, has fixed herself at the hotel.

But mademoiselle has promised to render long visits to her friends of one, two, by possibility, three months, and to revoke these happy arrangements, and re-enter as from to-day miladi's service, "c'est à présent une chose entièrement impossible."

Then miladi's spare figure seems to grow suddenly an inch taller in her haughty mortification at the rejection of the overtures she has unwillingly humiliated herself to make, and she asks icily whether Millefleurs has seen her son.

"Monsieur Chandos?" cries the girl. "Mon Dieu! miladi, I keep not a record of the movements of ce jeune homme. Somewhere this morning I have seen him—in the house, in the garden, with Monsieur Sharp, the avocat. But where he is now to be found, je ne sais pas."

So Lady Knollys sweeps with what dignity she may from the apartment, that same "housekeeper's room" in which she surprised Chandos in the act of chasing the lady's-maid round the table; and mademoiselle, so soon as the creaking of miladi's shoes has quite died away, draws a key from her pocket, and unlocking a closet door throws it open.

"Chandos, come forth," she cries, laughingly. "The mother needs thee, mon enfant."

A sound of breaking glass, as a bottle swept from a shelf strikes the floor, a smothered exclamation, a rattling of pans and preserve pots, incautiously displaced by advancing feet, and the young man obeys the injunction. The girl

salutes his appearance with a peal of laughter—subdued but irrepressible.

"Shut thou the eyes until I place thee in position to admire," she exclaims, with mischievous glee. "Now regard thyself, Chandos, mon élégant."

She has placed him before the cheffonier with a looking-glass back. His smooth hair is thickly powdered with black dust, graceful festoonings of cobwebs extend from his ears to his shoulders, the right leg of his "trousers of jockey" shows a red stain upon the light cloth.

Verily there is gross neglect and mismanagement in my lady's household if the condition of the housekeeper's closet may be accepted as a fair criterion.

"I believe you knew the state the wretched place is in and played a trick upon me purposely," he cries, furiously.

"En bien? Well?" says the girl, making a moue of defiance at him, for which he would gladly box her little ears if he only dared.

"Why could you not let my mother find us talking here? Any excuse would have served. It was too bad of you, Lavinie."

He is still pale with anger, but the anger is subsiding. There is some spell about her perfect fearlessness and unconcern, some subtle attraction in her bright, riant face, which conquers him.

He may chafe under the yoke, but she keeps him always in subjection as no other woman has ever done, for the sole reason that she never yields to him in any single particular as other women have yielded.

"Brush thyself quickly, and run to thy dressing-room before miladi returns," she cries, handing him a clothes-brush; and he obeys with the awkwardness of an unpractised hand.

It is noticeable that even in this small matter of freeing himself from dust and cobwebs she lets him act as his own valet, lifting not a little finger to assist.

Not by the small cares with which most women please their lovers, but by absolute independence and constant exactions does the soubrette retain her hold upon the fickle fancy of Chandos Knollys.

"Go!" she exclaims, refusing even his entreaty for a kiss, and pointing to the door. "I am not prodigal of caresses, mon ami. Whilst that you can only implore as a favour it is my privilege to refuse. Après, when you can demand as a right, it will be my pleasure willingly to yield."

So he goes grumbling away to change his stained pantaloons, and perform much-needed ablutions, whilst mademoiselle takes his place before the cheffonier and contemplates herself long and earnestly.

It is not a laughing face now—the features are sad, careworn, weary.

"I play for a high stake, and I have not much to lose—perhaps that is why the game bores me," she murmurs, in French. "Not much to lose, not even a heart. Ah! Alphonse, my soul, when I dreamed to enthroned me at the bureau of thy restaurant, the dream enchanted me as this one will never do."

"I have hunted for you everywhere," says Lady Knollys, frigidly, looking up from a writing-table as Chandos enters her boudoir a quarter of an hour later.

"Did you want me? I have been in my dressing-room."

"Read this," continues his mother. "It is a reply to the letter of complaint the insolent young engineer who threw you into the brook has had the impertinence to address to Sir Marmaduke."

"Written in my father's name, but in your caligraphy," comments Chandos, a red flush of angry confusion rising to his dark cheeks. "The fellow will doubtless find out that Sir Marmaduke Knollys has had a relapse, and will question the inspiration of the epistle."

"This is merely intended as a copy," explains my lady. "I find that Crimp wrote to dictation the invitation which brought Mr. Cathcart here to luncheon. Let the valet copy and despatch this letter, and its authenticity will not be questioned."

"Capital, a stroke of genius, which would never have occurred to me," says her son, admiringly.

He has occasion to pass the door of the chamber where the sick man lies, not dead, as the lawyer took him to be yesterday, but in such a pitiable state of mental and physical prostration that he can hardly understand the purport of a document Mr. Sharp is at this instant presenting, or force strengthless fingers to affix his signature.

But Chandos Knollys has already done his duty, according to his lights, by making a careless inquiry as to what the new doctor thinks of "the governor" this morning. Filial affection is with him an empty name. He does not enter to gladden a father's heart with loving words, he does not even pause to renew the question which was answered hours ago—he has almost forgotten how.

When, turning his head, he sees doctor and lawyer emerge from the sick-room, he responds to the former's low bow with a curt nod and goes on his way unheeding.

"Supercilious young puppy that," comments Mr. Sharp, haughtily. "Haven't got beyond the nine days' blindness yet. See nobody's importance but his own."

"If Sir Marmaduke—ah—should fail to rally—"

"No danger of that, is there?"

"No, oh, no! It will be the best tonic I can administer to inform him that the madman is safely housed under lock and key."

"You will be in a position to administer that tonic two hours hence."

"Wonderful!" cries Dr. Tom. "You are—aw—a man of action, ah—a man of action."

"I hope so," says Mr. Sharp, modestly.

They shake hands and separate, as by previous arrangement, at the foot of the stairs. The doctor passes into the sick man's deserted sanctum, where a decanter of brown sherry and the morning paper invite discussion; the lawyer into the open air, where a dog-cart is in waiting.

"To the station, sir?" says a groom, touching his bat.

"Yes, and drive quickly."

A hundred yards or so beyond the lodge gates, with their fabulous stone monsters and their heraldic devices in granite, the dog-cart comes upon a cab standing by the roadside. The horse is cropping the short grass, and three stout fellows smoking short pipes are lying about in attitudes indicative of lazy enjoyment. They touch their hats also, and one of them asks:

"Will this do, sir?"

"Yes," answers Mr. Sharp, shortly.

So accurately have time and distance been calculated that the train is puffing out of the railway station, six miles from The Hall, just as the dog-cart comes within sight of it. The receding train has stranded upon the platform a solitary traveller, who greets the lawyer with effusion.

"I received your telegram," he begins.

"I suppose so, or you would not be here," says Mr. Sharp.

They do not talk much on the homeward journey, the new-comer's attempts at conversation being for the most part nipped in the bud by his wary companion.

"We will get out here," says the latter, when they reach the long, straggling street of Aston-burne. Looking behind him a minute later the groom sees them turn into the Knollys Arms.

"A deep 'un, that lawyer chap; wants to take his drops on the sly," thinks the man, with a smile of pleasure at his own acuteness.

But Mr. Sharp does not take his drops on the sly or otherwise until Simeon Blunt has been summoned and persuaded to "liquor up" with him, an invitation the quondam gold-digger accepts, nothing loth.

He presents a peculiar appearance this morning. He wears still the trousers and vest of dirty canvas, but above them he has assumed the long black coat of a High Church clergyman. There are various minor incongruities in his costume, of all of which he appears superbly unconscious.

"It were kind of you, gen'lemen, werry kind, to call and tell me as Sir Marmadook is well enough to receive a visitor," he says, reflectively. "Not as I shouldn't ha' come in any case, but still I take it werry kindly. Ma'am, I'll trouble you for fresh glasses, and a big bottle o' fizz. I've travelled in many lands, gen'lemen, and I've drunk many queer mixtures—here's health—but for cementin' a new friendship, and promotin' Christian feelin', it's my 'sperience as there's nothin' like 'fizz.'"

So the new friends hob and nob amicably at Mr. Blunt's expense, and start together presently for The Hall. There is not a soul in sight when they reach the spot where the cab-horse is still nibbling the short grass, and the three stout fellows having risen from the sward are leaning against the wooden rails by the roadside, still in attitudes indicative of lazy enjoyment. Two of them have left off smoking, the third is again filling his pipe.

"Got a lucifer, mate?" says the latter to Simeon Blunt.

Mr. Blunt has got a lucifer, which he good-naturally strikes by friction against his black coat, and holds in the concave hollow of his two hands that a puff of wind may not extinguish the faint flame ere it fulfils its destiny. Intent upon his task he does not observe that those stout loungers have ceased to lean against the rails and are approaching him from behind.

He does not become aware of the fact until a thick woollen cap has been forced over his head, blinding him and stifling his outcries, whilst strong hands pinion his arms to his side.

The capture has been effected swiftly and deftly, with the dexterity acquired by long experience. A minute later a cab carrying three inside passengers and a driver is bowling rapidly along the turnpike road, whilst Mr. Sharp and the gentleman who came by train are continuing their leisurely walk to The Hall.

CHAPTER XX.

A sudden exclamation, as of one
Who wakes from fancied safety to behold
The menace of grim death.

"But the baronet—"

"Confound the baronet!" cries Mr. Prometheus Hornblower, with a good-humoured chuckle which shakes not only his burly frame but every article upon Colin Cathcart's breakfast table, making the glass dishes jingle one against another, and the cups and saucers rattle upon the tray. "Confound the baronet! I will tell you what it is, Colin; since you lunched with that old buffer with the handle to his name you have had Sir Marmaduke Knollys on the brain, and have studied his interests a precious deal more than those of the Braxton, Duffpool, Hollowbridge, and Astonburne Direct Railway."

"I am not a radical," rejoins Colin, quietly, "but I do not think a series of luncheons at a duke's table would render me a tift-hunter. Nor could they, I am sure, make me forget my duty to the company whose servant I am."

"I know that," laughs the self-made man, with another ponderous chuckle; "and I don't mind admitting, lad, that if my lady had asked me to dinner the day we called upon her husband instead of calling me a bagman and talking about having me ejected from the grounds—"

"It is hard Sir Marmaduke should suffer for his wife's fault, particularly after he has tendered a handsome apology."

"Or for his son's fault either, I suppose? That is why you take his part after the attempt to stop your fishing."

"I flatter myself I had the best of that encounter," answers Colin, with a smile.

"And I mean to have the best of my encounter in the end. I vowed to 'sort' your friend, the baronet, and I will. The line 'tall not 'serve one yard from the course marked out."

"Which Sir Marmaduke states is honey-combed by the galleries of the abandoned lead mine."

"I don't believe it," says Mr. Prometheus Hornblower, flatly. "If he tells the truth, why don't he offer facilities for having the mine examined? It is my conviction that the cock-and-bull story about the honeycombing is—is—not to use unduly strong language—a—bloom-ing—lie!"

"Letters, sir," announces the rosy-cheeked handmaiden of the cottage, wherein the young engineer for the consideration of so many weekly shillings has found a temporary home.

"Ah, now we shall hear what the baronet thinks about his son's impudence, and the very proper way in which you resented it," cries Mr. Hornblower, in that stentorian voice of his, which seems to fill Colin's small parlour, in which the two men are discussing the maternal meal, with a jovial gale of sound. "Another apology, perhaps."

"I believe him to be too thorough a gentleman to refuse the amende honorable when he finds himself or his family in the wrong."

"We shall see," answers Mr. Hornblower, circularly. "I can guess your drift, though I don't understand the lingo. We shall see," he repeats, with a shout of triumph, as the young man's lengthening visage gives a clue to the tone of the brief note. "Hand it over, lad, hand it over. We'll read Sir Marmaduke's apology aloud."

"I am sorry it is not more pleasant reading," answers Colin, with simple dignity, as he complies, and the self-made man, with a voice choking with merriment and buttered toast, rehearses the following effusion:

"SIR MARMADUKE KNOLLYS has received a lettersigned Colin Cathcart, which gives a garbled account of a dispute in which his son was grossly and impertinently insulted. Sir Marmaduke has only to add that if after having thus forfeited such privileges as may hitherto have been accorded the young man should presume, upon any pretext whatever, to trespass upon Sir Marmaduke's land he will be treated as a common poacher, rogue and vagabond."

"Brayvo! Brayvo!" cries the chairman of the B.D.H. and A.D.R., ecstatically. "Scratch a baronet and you find a Tartar. I'll tell you what, Colin my lad, we have both had a quarrel thrust upon us that was none of our seeking, and we'll fight it out to the bitter end. Drop these cursed aristocrats (always excepting that little lady up at The Rectory yonder) and cast in your lot thoroughly with me."

"What do you propose to do?" asks Colin, colouring at the allusion to Miss Pole-Gall.

"Explore," says Prometheus Hornblower, in a strange whisper. "We will trespass like common poachers, rogues and vagabonds. In the very witching time of night, when churchyards yawn, and village public-houses shut up shop, you and I, and half a dozen of the navvies, with the aid of a coil of rope and a dark lantern will either verify or confute Sir Marmaduke's childish babblings about honeycombed ground."

"The old lead mine has been boarded up for twenty years."

"What of that? It is only a case of putting a cold chisel in one's pocket. We will soon cut through nails and screws and rip off the old boards, I'll bet. You understand all about mines, don't you?"

"I am not a mining engineer," answers Colin, with a smile. "Still I have a pretty fair general knowledge of the subject."

"Good. That is where I fail, or I could have managed the thing without help. Now what dangers are we to provide against? Explosive gas, eh?"

"Not in a disused lead mine. The one great danger is not gas, but water."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply this—that when a mine has been sunk there is a constant tendency for water to filter through the sides and accumulate at the bottom, just as it does at the bottom of a well. The tendency is corrected when the mine is in working order by the pumping machines. As for this abandoned mine it is a dead certainty that there are many feet of water at the bottom."



[THE HAND OF FATE.]

Care must be exercised in lowering an explorer that you do not drown him."

"Forewarned—forearmed. We will be cautious. No more coffee, thank you. If you have finished breakfast I vote we get round to the bridge and see whether the new gang is an improvement upon the last."

So the chairman and the engineer of the B.D.H. and A. Direct Railway push back their chairs from the table, and dismiss for the present their plans to circumvent the county magnate who has developed such senseless opposition to the undertaking.

But in the course of the day Prometheus Hornblower quietly makes arrangements for the carrying out of his scheme, and at midnight the little band of trespassers meet at the appointed rendezvous, the bridge across the trout-stream, hard by the cottage of Miss Wraxall, the reputed witch.

It is dark as Erebus. A stiff wind is blowing, one of those soft, warm summer winds which herald rain. The members of this little expedition keep together by instinct and by the sense of hearing. A more favourable night for their purpose could not have been selected; poachers and keepers will alike be fast asleep; the chances of interruption are hardly worth considering.

Yet is there a spice of romantic adventure in the task they have set themselves to perform. The lawlessness and the mystery of it, the midnight excursion, the Egyptian darkness, the necessity for silence and reasonable haste appeal to a young imagination.

Colin's blood courses more quickly through his veins. He almost regrets that the risk is so small, the danger so trifling. That excitable mood is upon him in which courage and burning, impassioned affection walk hand in hand. Oh, that this were a storming party and he the leader, a desperate forlorn hope, the hard-earned success of which might bring him a step nearer to the girl he loves.

"May Pole-Gell!" He whispers her name to himself as he walks, and the great star-like

eyes shine upon him through the soft summer darkness. He sees her pure, pale face with its exquisite delicacy of feature.

For the first time he feels the resistless strength of the giant love, and experiences a foretaste of what it must be to rise and wrestle with him day by day as some human souls are forced to do. For the first time—measuring himself and his fortunes with the humility of a true lover against the little lady whose sworn knight he must ever remain, be she disdainful or gracious, cruel or kind—he realises that to some of us love is but another name for pain.

But the party has already arrived at the scene of operations. Prometheus Hornblower, handling the tools as dexterously as though—instead of the suit of blue serge, the flashing diamond as big as a pea, and the massive gold chain, he wore still a workman's blouse, has with less noise than one could believe possible prized away the planking.

The mouth of the old lead mine, a frightful yawning chasm, black and terrible, is revealed by the rays of a dark lantern. The preparations for the descent are complete.

"Who will go down first?" asks the self-made man. "I am too heavy to volunteer."

He flashes the lantern into the faces of the navvies with shrewd enjoyment of the consternation his question has inspired.

"I will go down, of course," answers Colin, quietly.

"Hand me the cushions," says Mr. Hornblower. "Now, Colin, the instant you shout or whistle we leave off paying out. Shout or whistle twice in quick succession and we haul up again. Are you ready?"

"Quite ready," answers Colin Cathcart.

They have passed a long cushion thick and soft round the body under the armpits, that the noose of the rope may not bruise the tender skin. They have slung the dark lantern round his neck by a cord, so that it dangles at his waist.

At the reply "Quite ready" strong hands

tighten their grasp of the rope, and the young engineer slips gently over the abyss. Prometheus Hornblower, unmindful of the brightness of his blue serge, falls prone upon his capacious stomach and peers over to watch the descent.

"Gently, gently," he says. "Don't pay out rope quite so fast. He might plunge into the water before he was aware."

Man of nerve and courage though he be he cannot help shuddering as he watches the receding light and thinks that his friend is suspended beside it. He had not expected that the mine would be so deep; the profundity appears so awful in its blackness he half repents—

"Snap!"

"Oh, my God!" cries Prometheus Hornblower, with a groan.

In various keys of horror and distress the acclamation is echoed by those rough men around him.

Suddenly, without warning, the rope has parted as though a knife had cut it somewhere in the depths below. Suddenly, without warning, the feeble glimmer of the lantern has disappeared.

"Cathcart, lad, where are you? Speak!" shouts Prometheus Hornblower, in agony, at the utmost pitch of his powerful voice.

But to that cry, loud as the shouting of Achilles, succeeds a silence intense and awful, like unto the silence of the grave. In the midst of it the self-made man appears to hear the echo in his own heart of words Colin Cathcart spoke this morning.

"As for this abandoned mine it is a dead certainty that there are many feet of water at the bottom. Care must be taken in lowering an explorer that you do not drown him."

And again, not lightly, not blasphemously, but as though those two words were the concentration of all appeal, Prometheus Hornblower invokes the Deity, crying aloud in the stillness:

"Oh, my God!"

(To be Continued.)



[LOVE AND HATE.]

A GALLANT HEART.

A NOVELETTE.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

THE HEART WON.

"Will he come?"

It was an important question that Lady Hilda Haws asked herself as she stood before the pier glass surveying herself in evening attire, a question of importance at least to her, for she was Lord Charles Warrington, the one man of all she knew whose voice could quicken her blood and bring the tell-tale blush to her cheek, and if he did not come to the ball that night she would perhaps never see him again.

His arrival was doubtful, for he and Lady Hilda had parted coolly the day before, owing mainly to her capricious disposition. They had been in a measure lovers, although no direct avowal had passed between them. She had lured him on and had thrust him back as a coquettish woman will, playing with what she really valued as a cat does with the mouse.

They had parted coolly because she had favoured the attractions of Hubert Trelawney, a brother officer of Warrington's, who was also in love with her, or implied as much by his constant attendance upon her. It was only a moment's caprice, for she knew that he was invited to the ball given by her mother, the Duchess of Gaveston, and in four-and-twenty hours she would heal his wounds with smiles.

But that eve there came the news of the great disaster in Zululand, and it was known that Warrington's regiment would have to leave in a few days at the outside. Already the men were preparing to go over the sea, and the officers were taking leave of their friends.

Warrington was an orphan and had few people to take leave of, but still it was a ques-

tion. Would he come to the ball? Two things were against it. He would, like his brother officers, have some packing to do, and—he had parted coldly with Lady Hilda.

An acknowledged belle, she had no lack of lovers. Men sighed around her, but they sighed in vain, for she only led them on for a while and cast them aside as toys she was tired with until she saw Charles Warrington. Him she put aside too, but she took him up again and again, winning him back with a look and a smile. Now at an inopportune moment she had chilled him again.

"But he will come," she said, as she looked at her graceful figure and beautiful face in the pier glass, "he will never leave without seeing me again."

Speaking hopefully, doubt yet lay in her heart, and she descended to the drawing-room with less elasticity of step than she usually showed. The Duke of Gaveston and the Duchess were already there waiting to receive their guest, the duke a man of fifty with a good face and figure and iron-grey hair, a man who had been an athlete in his time and was a leader in the hunting field still.

The duchess, five years his junior, did not look more than thirty-five, a well-preserved woman whose beauty had scarce lost its early bloom, and but for a slight tendency to fulness of figure would scarce have been considered a matron.

"You are not well, Hilda," she said, with a quiet, anxious look at her daughter. "If you have a headache keep to your room for an hour. We shall have very few people here before ten o'clock."

But Lady Hilda was not disposed to retire again. She had had enough of being alone, and she remained talking with the duke, who idolised her, until the noise of carriages arriving was heard without.

Once begun, for two long hours it never ceased, and the rich and noble and beautiful thronged up the staircase until the saloons of the Belgravian mansion were crowded.

The duke and duchess grew weary of receiving, but smiling held their ground, and Lady Hilda sat where she could command a view of the door, where she patiently bore the infliction of the attentions of quite a little host of admirers.

But still he came not, and at length she was obliged to yield to the pressure brought to bear upon her and the Honourable Hubert Trelawney led her out to join in a waltz.

This Hubert Trelawney was in his way a man of mark, of striking appearance, and unquestionably a man of courage, and a gallant of whom strange things was whispered. He was one whom it was impossible to number among the ordinary throng. No woman could treat with complete indifference a look from his dark, speaking eyes, or listen unmoved to the persuasive tones of his well-modulated voice.

Lady Hilda felt some interest in him, but not sufficient to show it, and he had been piqued by her treatment of his advances, for such love as he had in his broken heart to bestow he had bestowed upon her.

And he came that night to the ball to speak—to ask her to have him, duke's daughter though she was. In point of family he was even better than she, for the Trelawneys dated back to a misty past, while the Gaveston dukedom was comparatively a modern creation.

"You have heard we are off to niggerland I suppose," he said, as they paused for a rest.

"Yes," she replied. "It is a poor, petty war, is it not?"

"Miserable," he replied, with a shrug, "and will be all over before we get there. It will only be a journey over the sea and back again."

"You are sure of that?" she asked, with sparkling eyes.

He looked down at her with a little wonder lurking in the depth of his eyes, and said:

"Quite sure. One victory, which of course Lord Chelmsford will bring about, will settle the whole business."

"Do the authorities in the War Office know this?"

"I should say so."

"Why then do they send you?"

"Oh, it looks well, you know—great promptitude in despatching troops, etcetera."

They took another turn in the room and paused again. Lady Hilda had a question to ask, and she put it with as much indifference as she could assume.

"Lord Charles Warrington, he of course is busy preparing?"

"I don't think so," rejoins the Honourable Hubert, "he had everything ready this afternoon, and I looked into his room as I came out. He was busy writing a letter or letters."

"He ought to be here to-night, he accepted," Lady Hilda said.

"Ah, then I'm afraid he has forgotten it."

"Forgotten it?"

"Yes, for as I was coming out he was growling about having the greater part of the evening on his hands."

"Perhaps he was in a miserable mood."

"On the contrary, I have never seen him in better spirits in my life. Shall we go on?"

"I have not been well to-day, and the rooms are warm. Will you excuse me?"

"Allow me to find some place away from the turmoil," he said, softly. "The conservatory will be cooler."

She signified her assent and they strolled out together to the conservatory, built out at the back of the house. It was of magnificent proportions for a town house and fitted with great taste, a pleasant little arcadia of ferns and flowers.

Others were there before them, and some dozen pairs were strolling up and down, talking and laughing softly, and others were seated under the shade of mighty ferns, whispering together.

"A cool, grateful air," said the Honourable Hubert, "here is a seat. A little rest will do you good."

They sat down and talked of commonplace things for awhile, but he was watching the rest of the loungers, who gradually melted away, lured back to the saloons by a fresh burst of delicious music, and after awhile they were alone. Then he changed his tone.

"Lady Hilda," he said, "I observed a little while ago the prospect of my regiment making a brief stay in Africa was pleasing to you."

"I think it is a pity to send out one of our finest regiments to such a place," she replied.

"A general compliment in which I hope I share," he said. "Are you glad on my account?"

It was a direct question, and might be called an abrupt one. She did not answer immediately, and he, leaning nearer to her and speaking a little more hurriedly than was his wont, went on:

"It may be impertinent of me to assume that you have more interest in me than any other," he said, "but it has been my ambition, my dream and hope, to gain the foremost place in your esteem."

"We are friends," she said, "and will always be so I trust."

"Friends," he repeated, passionately, "how I hate the cold word when I look at you, Lady Hilda. You cannot have been insensible to my love and devotion."

"I am sensible that you and others have been kind enough to honour me with some attention."

"But you must not compare me with the rest. Mine has been no passing courtesy, but the outcome of a love lying deep in my heart. I could not leave for that miserable country without knowing my fate. Lady Hilda, bid me hope, and I care not if I am immersed in a dungeon for a year, so that in the end I may have your love."

He spoke passionately, and when he first began she was so far sensible of it that she felt the hot blood rush to her cheeks and her lips tremble. Devotion and gentle courtesies had been showered upon her, but this was the first time a declaration from a man's lips had come to her.

And he was so earnest too, and in the few

simple words he uttered put more pathos than some could have put in the most glowing language of a fervid poet. And again, although she did not look at him, she felt the thrilling power of his look, so that she sat still without an answer upon her lips.

"If I have come upon you unprepared, and nothing more probable," he said, "I will ask you to keep silent now until you are assured of the true state of your feeling towards me, unless you can give me hope."

"I was indeed unprepared," said Lady Hilda, with an effort, "but I have no need to reflect—"

"Ah!" exclaimed he, with his face lighting up.

"For I cannot give you hope."

She rose up, and he sprang from his seat, seeking gently to detain her.

"Not yet—not yet," he said. "Stay, if only for a minute to think."

"No," she said, with tears of sympathy in her eyes, for she was sorry to give him pain, "I know that it can never be. I am grateful to you for thinking so kindly of me, but I could never be your wife."

"It is a pity then that you ever gave me encouragement," he said, suddenly changing his tone. "The amusing entertainment you have been indulging in may prove serious in the end."

"I do not understand you," she said, with a rising haunter.

"You will not," he said, "but it behoves me to speak plainly. These are some men who do not mind being trifled with. They can be taken up and dropped like a worn glove without having any of their deeper feelings roused. They can bear it with a smile and dangle about another love, to be taken up and dropped again; but, Lady Hilda, I am not one of them."

"Do you threaten me?" she asked.

"No, I only warn," he said. "I know not where my nature will carry me to under certain circumstances, and I can no more resist its promptings than the flower can refuse to unfold under the warmth of the sun. I loved—you gave me some encouragement—enough I hoped to warrant me in speaking to-night, but I find I have been befooled."

"I accepted your attentions as I did those of others," she said.

"But I am not as other men," he answered, "and I do solemnly warn you not to accept the offer of any other man, for if I live, as true as there is a blue heaven above us, he shall never be your husband."

He was almost beside himself with the passion of disappointment, but he did not speak loudly. His voice was low and clear, and its tones were more terrible to listen to than the howling of the man whose anger is as evanescent as the froth of the sea.

"Again I ask you to consider my offer," he said.

"I have given my answer," replied Lady Hilda, "and will abide by it."

"You cannot deceive me," he said. "Warrington is the favoured man. Do not forget that we are going out together."

"I will warn him," said Lady Hilda, with sudden boldness. "It is foolish of me to be terrified by your threats. You are a coward to offer them to a woman."

"A coward, am I?" he said. "Now do not be alarmed. See this tiny pistol here, I am never without it. You have refused me. Dare me to blow out these brains of mine and the thing is done."

He cocked the pistol and put the barrel near his forehead. Lady Hilda turned shuddering away and held out her hands imploringly.

"You see now," he said, as he replaced the weapon in his pocket, "the man you have to deal with. Be silent as to what has passed between us, and beware of accepting a man you love."

He offered her his arm to lead her back, but she walked on slowly, disregarding it. Together they entered the saloon, where the first person they encountered was the duchess.

"My dear Hilda," she said, "still so pale."

Really, Mr. Trelawney, I am afraid you have been scaring away the roses from her cheeks."

It was spoken in jest, and he calmly smiled as if he had a right to take it so.

"No, duchess," he replied. "I have sought rather to bring roses to her cheeks with a merry jest, but there is no charm in my voice and must depute the pleasing task to another."

He spoke airily enough, but the duchess was not entirely deceived. As she and Lady Hilda moved across the room she softly said:

"Mr. Trelawney has been making advances to you."

"Proposed indeed," Lady Hilda replied.

"I am sorry for that," the duchess rejoined. "He is not a man to be rejected. You ought never to have given him a chance."

"I did not dream of it coming," Lady Hilda replied.

"Lord Warrington has just arrived," said the duchess, as they entered the front saloon. "I fancied he was looking for you."

"He had better not find me," said Lady Hilda.

"Why not?"

"Mr. Trelawney is dangerous you say."

"And would you accept Warrington?"

"I do not think I could refuse him if he asked me."

"My own choice," the duchess said. "And, see, he is coming this way."

Lord Warrington was on the bright side of five-and-twenty still, with more advantages than ever Hubert Trelawney possessed, for in addition to good looks, birth, and fortune, he had a charming disposition, and was renowned for being the best-hearted fellow in the regiment.

If anybody wanted a little help it was from him they looked for it; an open heart and an open purse, within reasonable bounds of course, were at the disposal of any brother officer in trouble. To the men he had bound himself by his gentle rule and little acts of timely generosity. He was not lax when in command of a guard or a detached troop on duty, but he could shut his eyes conveniently to little faults. On one point only he was a martinet, and that was cleanliness.

A slovenly soldier he abhorred, being the pattern of neatness himself, and a dirty face, hands, or an ill-arranged uniform, brought the offender into more disgrace than other sins deemed more serious. As for disobedience, he never had to deal with it. To hear was to obey him.

As he espied Lady Hilda and came towards her his gallant bearing drew the eyes of many fair ones upon him, and some sighed in secret as they thought of a prize beyond their reach. There is nothing unwomanly in aspiring to have a lover, but the reverse, and while aspiring it is as well to choose one worthy of being loved.

Whatever he had in his heart there was nothing but courteous ease visible in his demeanour. If he had been hurt on the previous day he was too good a man to show the petulance of a schoolboy, and his greeting to Lady Hilda was the perfection of ease and grace.

"You are late," she said, with a reproachful look.

"I was on duty until nine," he replied, "and then I had to hurry through a report to the colonel. I have not lost a moment's time in hastening here."

Her hand was in his and he gave it the slightest possible pressure, but quite enough to heighten the light in her eyes and add another rose to her cheek. The duchess had gone on her way and they were left together.

"I hope," he said, "that you have kept one dance open for me."

"I have many open," she replied, "as I did not care to dance at all. Mr. Trelawney led me to believe that you were not coming, and you may thank a slight indisposition for my half-filled programme."

"Trelawney must have taken to guessing, as I have not seen him to-day."

"Not in your quarters?"

"No."

"Then he lied to me," thought Lady Hilda.

"The man is more unscrupulous than I thought him."

In the presence of Lord Warrington the fear Trelawney inspired in the conservatory melted away and Lady Hilda could have laughed at herself for it. It was ridiculous to think that this gallant nobleman had anything to fear from even such a redoubtable foe, or that he would not shield her. He took her programme and marked off two waltzes for himself, and the next dance being the Lancers, for which Lady Hilda had refused a partner, they crossed to a corner of the room and sat down.

"We sail at three to-morrow. Perhaps I ought to say to-day," said Lord Warrington, referring to his watch. "It is a nuisance going off on such a small business, for there is neither honour nor glory attached to wiping out these savages, but one must put duty foremost."

"I have heard that you are not likely to be wanted," said Lady Hilda, "and that it will only be a voyage out and back again."

"A ridiculous business," he answered, "but I shall be glad to get back again, unless—" he paused and looked at her with wistful eyes, "unless I am long enough away to lose you."

"And would that make you miserable?" She tried to smile, but her face was growing pale, and the room was stifling.

Just in front of them two or three dowagers and some elderly gentlemen had established themselves, and were talking loudly. Under cover of the noise they made the merest dunces of a lover could have said all he had to say.

"If you wait so long," Lord Warrington said, "I shall be egotistical enough to interpret it as something hopeful to myself. Tell me that you will wait."

A moment's pause and a struggling within her. She remembered the threats of Trelawney, but again she laughed her fears away.

"And if I wait and you do not return?" she softly asked.

"Could I be so mad or so treacherous?"

"Men have been so."

"But I will return if I live. I love too well. Give me hope."

He laid his hand upon hers, and their fingers tightly closed in a warm, loving clasp. There was no more to be said, and wrapped in their dream of joy neither noticed Hubert Trelawney, who at that moment came by with a quiet smile upon his face.

Such a smile at such a time from him was more threatening than most men's frowns.

CHAPTER II.

AT DURBAN.

As anticipated, Lord Warrington's regiment did not reach its destination until the war was over. Ulundi had been fought, the Zulus cut to pieces, and poor old Cetewayo taken prisoner, so there was no work for them to do.

But they did not return immediately, for no orders to that effect had arrived, and the people of Durban were unwilling to let them go.

The handsome and dashing officers found favour among the families of the richer citizens, and although they had none of the glory they had a fair share of the joy following success.

Captain Trelawney, as usual, soon made his mark, and there was much whispering among the young ladies about his handsome eyes, his noble figure, and his knightly bearing. He and Lord Warrington were the two pets of the regiment.

They were not friends, but they were so much out together that their acquaintanceship ripened a little, and Lord Warrington was genial to Trelawney, who from the time they left England up to this had certainly sought his friendship by every means of outward courtesy.

Not a word concerning Lady Hilda had passed between them.

Among other families they visited at Durban was one named Walters. Walters père was a merchant and a thriving one; his entertain-

ments were of the best, and his two daughters numbered among the belles of the colony. There was a Mrs. Walters, a quiet, reserved lady, with immense faith in her husband and daughters—one of those women who so completely sink self in all they say and do that their quiet, unobtrusive virtues are apt to be overlooked.

Rosa, the eldest girl, was a blonde, with a pretty, slim figure and mouth and eyes to set men dreaming; Arabella was a brunette with eyes that flashed fire and played the part of a magnet. One year was all the difference in their ages, and Rosa, the elder, was just twenty.

There was one son, the eldest of the children, whom they spoke of as "dear, brave Vauban," who had left with Lord Chelmsford's army as a volunteer, and had not yet returned.

Lord Warrington thought it no sin to be friendly with these girls, nor was it, for he was loyal to his love, and by every ship homeward bound he sent a letter describing his daily life. If he was reticent on any matter it was on his intimacy with the Walters.

Trelawney, on the contrary, wrote copiously about them, throwing his letters broadcast among his acquaintances, and he was very particular about Lord Warrington as "enjoying himself immensely with the handsome Walters girls," feeling sure that sooner or later it would reach the ears of Lady Hilda.

Meanwhile he was playing a double game in the colony. While paying outward attention to Arabella he secretly inclined to Rosa, and by the power of his art led her to feel and know that he loved her, but was compelled for some reason to withhold it from the world.

Picnics were in fashion just then, and Mr. Walters took the lead in one to a place called Black Man's Hill, some few miles without Durban. Lord Warrington and Captain Trelawney were of course invited, and they formed part of the company in the Walters's waggonette.

Rosa was the only one of the party at all depressed, and Lord Warrington, who had attached himself to her, found her a somewhat un congenial companion, and it was not until he saw her eyes fixed upon Trelawney, who was very merry with Arabella, that he was able to grasp the cause of her quietude.

"Jealous and fond of Trelawney," he thought. "Poor thing; she had better have fallen in love with the Grand Turk. I'd as soon see a sister of mine dead as in love with him."

In very pity for her he became doubly attentive, a fact that did not escape the notice of many present, and after awhile (it was when Trelawney left Arabella to the care of another gallant) she warmed towards him and they were as merry as any two people there, which was saying a great deal.

Mr. Walters made a good host and had provided handsomely. Rich viands and the best of wines were spread out upon the hill, and eyes sparkled at the jest or drooped beneath the amorous look, or flashed back a response to a lover's petition, softly breathed so that it only reached the ear for which it was intended.

Rosa sat by Trelawney during luncheon, they scarcely exchanging a dozen words until it was nearly over, when he spoke a few words under his breath to which she responded with a look.

Shortly after the party broke up and scattered themselves about, some, in the most nonchalant manner they could get up for this occasion, wandering away alone or in pairs into a wood on the eastern side of the hill.

Rosa entered alone, and Trelawney entered alone, and ere long they met and he clasped her in his arms and pressed a fervent kiss upon her lips.

"My darling," he breathed, softly, "my own sweet love."

"Hubert," Rosa replied, "is it not time for these secret meetings to come to an end?"

"And these stolen meetings so sweet, my love," he gaily answered.

"Sweet but wrong," she answered, with a slight shudder, then looked up into his handsome face, softened to its most winning expression, and laid her head upon his breast. "Hubert, you will be true to me?"

"Ay, true till death part us," he replied. "You must not doubt me. True love is all faith."

"And has not mine been true?" she asked.

"Ere I had known you a week my heart was yours. You won it, how I cannot tell, and you have taught it to beat only in response to your will. You say to me 'Come,' and I come, or 'Go,' and I leave you. At your bidding I have met you in secret in all hours—nay, in the very dead of night, and in five short weeks. Oh! Hubert, Hubert, proclaim our love and make me your wife."

"In a few days at the outside," he said, "and all shall be made clear."

"But if you should deceive me—"

Rosa paused and looked at him with a terrible look in her eyes, but he only smiled.

"If I should deceive," he said, "well, what then?"

"I would not live another hour," she said. "Sometimes I think you must have the art of the magician of old to cast such a spell about me. No bird in the fowler's net more helpless than I, so completely at your mercy. Oh! Hubert, Hubert, you will be true."

"Hush," he said, "not so loud. I hear footsteps approaching. Let us withdraw into the bushes."

He drew her in and they stood perfectly concealed from the passer by, who proved to be Lord Warrington. He was smoking a cigar, and deeply thinking with a hopeful smile upon his face. Trelawney guessed his thoughts.

"Away from here with him," he muttered, "but it is all a dream, for you shall never meet again except with hatred to embitter one or both."

When he had gone by, Rosa and Hubert Trelawney pushed on together through the dense bush to an open glade, where they sat down at the foot of a huge palm tree. Rosa's face still wore a troubled look, and Trelawney's had a hesitating air like one who has something unpleasant to reveal and fears to begin.

"You know the reason for the secrecy I have implored you to observe," he said, "but you do not know all the difficulties in the way of its removal. It is of that I came to speak to you to-day. If I marry without the sanction of Sir Egbert Trelawney I shall be disinherited. His sanction, however, as I told you, can be had for asking, and I have written for it—it is only a question of time."

"And how time crawls," sighed Rosa.

"My darling, the days will soon pass, be not impatient, for see how I, with my love—"

"You? Oh, Hubert, what can your waiting be to mine now?"

And again she shuddered.

He drew her soft face to his and kissed her fondly again and again. The magic touch of his lips drove all thoughts of all else but love from her heart, and with a sigh of sweet content she put her arms about his neck and nestled down close to his heart.

Hubert Trelawney was truly a mighty conqueror among poor, weak, all-confiding women, and, like many other conquerors, he crushed those over whom he obtained a victory.

He never professed any pride in his family, but he had plenty of it in his heart, and he looked down in secret upon the colonial trader and his daughters. Pleasant people to know in that outlandish place, nice girls to while away an hour with, but no more.

He had, of course, no guardian whom it was necessary to ask for permission before he could marry and the letter he had written was simply to the Horse Guards to resign his commission. He wanted to get home before his brother officers for a purpose that may readily be guessed.

If he could only involve Lord Warrington in some escapade at the Cape he would leave him in the midst of it and carry the news home. He knew Lady Hilda's pride and how bitterly she would resent any dalliance with another woman, and, with demoniacal cunning, he had led the society of Durban to believe that Warrington was paying attention to Rosa, while he had in secret worked upon her to his own base ends.

Poor Rosa! She was pretty and gentle and

very simple. She knew men could be rough, for she had seen them so, but she never thought they could be untrue to their vows, especially if they were such soft-spoken gentlemen as Captain Trelawney.

So she trusted him, believed in him, and reaped the bitter reward so familiar to confiding women.

When the party reassembled, the last to join were Rosa and Lord Warrington, who came out of the wood together. Rosa looked pale and anxious, and there was much whispering among the guests. Mrs. Walters looked closely at the pair with a troubled face, but was reassured by the honesty stamped on the face of Lord Warrington.

"Well, dear," whispered Arabella in Rosa's ear as they settled down in the wagonette, "I trust you have enjoyed your tête-à-tête with a live lord."

"We were only a few minutes together," replied Rosa.

"Oh, fie, you fibber!"

"It is true, Arabella. I was for a long time in the wood alone. We met as we were coming out."

"Well, I congratulate you upon your conquest," said Arabella. "It is better than mine."

"Yours?"

"Hush! not a word until we get home," whispered Arabella.

The reaction of a merry day appeared to be upon nearly all the party, and there was very little merriment on the way home. The conversation rather flagged than otherwise, and the expressions of regret at parting were for the most part conventional.

Lord Warrington and Trelawney walked away together, the latter with a cigar in his mouth.

"That Rosa is a charming girl," he said.

"Very pleasant," replied Lord Warrington, "a good, simple girl, I should say."

"You should say," said the other, jocosely; "of course you should."

"Why?"

"Because you of all men ought to know. You are engaged, are you not?"

"Look here, Trelawney," said Lord Warrington, "I will thank you not to couple my name with that of Miss Walters."

"But I don't couple it, my dear fellow. Other people do that. The very date of your wedding is spoken of with confidence."

"What an annoying thing—for the girl," said Lord Warrington, "and for me too."

"But a man can put up with a little idle talk of that sort," said Trelawney, with a grin.

"Not if he is placed as I am. You know I am engaged."

"I know nothing of the sort, Warrington. When did you confide the fact to me?"

"I have not done so, I know, but you must be aware that I am engaged to Lady Hilda."

"I am a bad hand at guessing," said Trelawney, "so never speculated how far you two had gone; nor was it any business of mine. But I can tell you one thing, old fellow, you ought not to have gone so far with the pretty Rosa."

"Good Heavens! how far have I gone?"

"To whispering and wandering in the wood, which in the old country is considered to be something."

"I have only whispered an occasional jest, as any man might have done."

"But the wood, my dear fellow, the wood—this afternoon?"

"I strolled there alone smoking and thinking. We met as I was returning."

"You will have some difficulty in making the world believe that," said Trelawney, with a shrug.

"The world may believe what it likes," said Lord Warrington.

"But if the reports reach Lady Hilda's ears?" hinted Trelawney.

"I will go to the Walters's no more," said Lord Warrington, after a pause. "I see I have been wrong, but I have sinned in thoughtlessness. We shall be ordered home directly, and then I can just pay the usual parting visit."

"But that won't satisfy Durban, or Miss Rosa either."

"Durban I do not care for, but Rosa will not regret my absence."

"Then I do not understand women, Warrington. I tell you she loves you, and she has taken all your little attentions as leading up to the sweet question. It's a bad business."

"I don't see it," said Lord Warrington. "I have been honest enough in my intentions whatever misinterpretation may be put upon my acts. Rosa is a sensible girl, and will never resent my absence."

"We shall see," said Trelawney. "For my part I think otherwise."

CHAPTER III.

BETRAYED.

THE two sisters were alone that night in their dressing-room talking over the events of the day. Rosa was still warm in her assertion of there being nothing between her and Lord Warrington, which Arabella refused to believe.

"Never mind, darling," she said, "I don't want to pry into your secret, but shall I tell you mine?"

"If you like," Rosa said, "but I hope you will not expect me to keep it."

"I will trust you," said Arabella. "I have a lover."

"That is no news. You are seldom without one."

"But a REAL lover that one would care to have or keep—a man of position, wealth, and all else that makes man worth thinking of; good birth, good looks, etcetera, you know."

"Indeed!" said Rosa.

"Yes, indeed," said Arabella, with a sweet, musical laugh; "and now guess his name."

"Dick Crofton."

"Oh, how can you? Dick Crofton is a colonial, and although he has no gentle birth he has good looks. Guess again."

"I really can't, unless it is Lord Warrington," said Rosa, wearily.

"You are very warm," Arabella said, "try again. Tre—Tre—"

Rosa looked up suddenly with a startled face.

"Trelawney," she said.

Arabella nodded, and, smiling, showed her pearly teeth. Rosa's face was in the shade, and its agitation had escaped her. There was a short silence, which was broken by Rosa.

"You were always a vain little thing, Arabella," she said, "and you must not mistake the slight attentions—"

"Slight, indeed, Rosa. Is he not always with me, and do I not know what passes between us? Captain Trelawney—"

"Arabella?"

"Captain Trelawney I said."

"You must be MAD to think of him," said Rosa, sharply.

"One would imagine that you were thinking of him too."

Rosa turned away, and for awhile nothing more passed between the sisters. Both were busy disrobing, and hid their faces from each other.

"Arabella," said Rosa, at last, "I hope you will forgive. I have no right to judge what passes between you and a lover, but it would never have dawned upon me that Captain Trelawney was one to you."

"He is nevertheless, and has spoken plainly," replied Arabella, "and never so plainly as to-day."

Nothing more was said. Rosa appeared to be weary, and exchanging a kiss they separated, Arabella to sleep and Rosa to sit by her window with a blank, despairing look upon her face turned up to the stars. No sleep, no rest for her that night, and before dawn she put on a walking-dress, and wearing a veil left the house.

Captain Trelawney was stirring too, and their footsteps were bent to the same point, just with-

out the town to a quiet pathway leading to the open country. She was there before him, pacing to and fro feverishly as he came lounging up.

He advanced smiling, holding out his hand, but she drew back, still keeping her veil down.

"Hubert," she said, harshly, "I have a question to ask you."

"It is a pity that we made an appointment this morning," he answered, coolly. "We ought to have considered the fatigue of yesterday. You are somewhat irritable."

"Listen to me," she said, with a sudden movement, throwing up her veil and revealing a pale, determined face. "When you first came here about two months ago you found a weak, confiding girl. You could mould me to what you pleased then, but now I am a woman, and you must deal honestly with me. What have you been saying to Arabella?"

"Such light, fanciful things as come uppermost when I am in such pleasant society," he replied.

"You have done more; you have talked to her as you talked to me once, and she believes you as readily as I did; but understand me it must end. I will not have her trifled with for an hour."

"Was it not agreed between us that I was to pay her most attention?"

"Only for awhile, Hubert. It was your proposal, and you urged it upon me as a necessity; but I fear I have been deceived. This uncle of yours may be a myth for aught I know, but myth or reality you must at once do justice to me. Our engagement must be announced and our marriage speedily solemnised, or—"

She paused in her hot speaking, and suddenly changing her tone threw her arms about his neck.

"Oh, Hubert, Hubert, be just—be true to me."

"I should be unjust to you and to me if I acted otherwise than I am doing," he replied, putting his arm lightly about her.

"Marry me in secret, then. Make me your wife," she cried, "and I will keep it hidden from the world, though I die in the keeping of it."

"You ask me to trust you when you have no trust in me."

"Oh, Hubert! have I not trusted you?"

"Yes, and you must trust me still."

"For how long—oh, God!—how long?" she asked.

"Weeks, or months it may be," he replied, with a rising sternness. "My word must be taken and not mistrusted, and I must have obedience or—we part."

She let go her hold and drew back from him with her eyes steadily fixed upon his face. He was a bold man at most times, but he shrank from that look.

"Part," she said, softly; "and you can even SPEAK the word when the bare thought of it is as an arrow from the bow of Death to me. Part now, Hubert? But I read my doom."

"You are a silly girl—" he began.

"It is false," she cried, "I am not! I was weak and foolish, but I am strong now. I know the worst; you can do no more to embitter my life. Go, sir—leave me!"

"My dear Rosa," he said, with a sneaking repentance dawning upon him, "I don't want to be cruel to you; I only wish you to be reasonable."

"Is it not reasonable that I should ask you to keep your vow?"

"In a way it is, darling; but you see there are obstacles, and—"

"I'll hear no more," she cried, with a sudden fierceness. Then subsiding again she went on, calmly: "It is useless for you to attempt to disguise it from me; I am deceived. Do not add to my misery by lingering here. Leave me, and be assured that in THIS WORLD I shall accuse you of nothing."

He looked at the stony face and fixed eyes, and again the silent monitor knocked within. But he had turned a deaf ear to conscience so long that he could not bring himself to listen honestly now. The door of his heart was closed, and he kept it shut, so poor conscience speedily grew tired and was heard no more.

"I am sorry, Rosa," he said, "to hear you say

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you wish us to part. The proposition comes from you, and I—"

"I'll not blame you," she said, slowly—"no, do not fear me. You can pursue your course unchecked by my accusing voice. On this side of the grave you are free."

It was pitiful, horrible to see one so young and beautiful despairing, but he was iron again, and only saw in her truth and strength a loophole for escape from the just punishment for his dastard faithlessness. But he winced a little. This cool leave-taking did not quite please him. His vanity told him that it ought to have been more despairing. A scene with tears and more bitter reproaches would have pleased him better.

"Since it is to be, Rosa," he said, "that part we must, I see no reason why it should not be as friends."

"You dastard!" she cried, as he approached her. "I'd as leave be embraced by one of the savage chiefs as by you now. Go—I despise you!" and turning away she left him hurriedly, making for the open country.

"Egad!" he muttered, as his eyes followed her retreating figure. "She has plenty of spirit, and women of spirit keep their own secrets. I'm sorry for her; with birth and— But I'll not think of it. I could not take a colonial rosebud back to the hot-houses of London society, the contrast would be too humiliating. Things are better as they are, much better."

She had disappeared in a hollow, still walking at a furious pace away from home. He judged that she was simply walking to get away from him, and with a satisfied smile he sauntered back to his quarters.

By the time he reached them the others were stirring, and it was announced to him that a mail steamer had come in in the night and letters might be looked for in an hour or two.

So it proved, and among others was one from the Horse Guards accepting his resignation, and another to the colonel appointing a successor to the post he vacated.

"And how soon can I leave, colonel?" he asked of his superior.

"As soon as you please, of course," was the reply. "There is a steamer homeward bound that starts to-day."

"I'll go by that," said Trelawney, "for I have important business calling me home."

He was as good as his word, and ere sunset he was out on the sea with Durban fading away in the distance.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AVENGER.

THERE WAS confusion in the house of the Walters. Rosa was missing and could not be found.

When breakfast was ready and she did not appear a servant was despatched to call her. The domestic came back to say that "Miss Rosa was not in her room, and had not slept on her couch." Mrs. Walters, alarmed, then went upstairs and brought back a confirmation of the news.

"Where can she be?" Mr. Walters asked, and neither Arabella nor the mother of the missing girl could suggest anything. Both were filled with a terror of something they had no words to express.

It soon transpired that she had been seen at dawn going through the town. An old man, attached to the establishment as an out-door messenger, had seen her hurrying away, and he pointed out the direction she had taken.

"I thought the young lady had gone out to enjoy the cool morning," he said.

"Which no doubt she has," replied Mr. Walters. "But it was wrong of her to go alone."

Again it became a question at home, "Whither had she gone?" Young ladies in the colony often rode early, for the heat of the day was terrible, but they did not walk abroad alone.

Mr. Walters, however, spoke lightly of her absence. It was a mere freak, he said, and

drinking a cup of coffee he ordered his horse, and rode in search of her.

From one place to another, to the houses of friends, and to every favourite haunt he knew of, the father went, but could obtain no news of her. At sunset he returned wearied and dispirited, hoping to find her at home, but she had not been seen or heard of, and Arabella and Mrs. Walters were in a state bordering on distraction.

The father did not rest. He thought it a case to put in the hands of the police, which was done. A night passed and then news of her was brought home—awful, bitter news for those who loved her to hear.

The gentle Rosa had been found—dead.

It was a mere chance that she was discovered. A wayfarer passing a pool paused idly to look into its depths, and among tangling weeds he saw her lying and gave the alarm, and those in search of her went thither and drew her to the bank.

The wretched father was the first to see her as they were bearing her homeward, and when they showed him the senseless, beautiful clay he uttered no cry, but made a sign for them to take her to his house and, tearless, followed in the rear.

The ignorant marvelled at his composure, but the experienced saw how deep was the wound he had received.

There was no discussion as to the cause of her death, for instinctively it was guessed, and the minds of all, within and without the house, turned to Lord Warrington. This was his fell work and he must be punished for it.

That very night young Vauban, the son, came riding home flushed with victory and proud of the special mention made of him by his commander. Light of heart he stepped into the house to receive the congratulations of those he loved, and in lieu of them was told the tidings of Rosa's death.

It was the father who unfolded the story to him, and named the man on whom suspicion lay. Like his father the bold young soldier wept not, but with dry eyes looked upon his sister as she lay in death.

He asked to be left alone awhile with her, and when they had gone out he knelt beside her and swore he would avenge her. It was wrong, but it was human, thus to take the punishment of the evil doer into his own hands. It showed the fallibility of the human perception when he with a black fury in his heart went to seek a man who in word, thought and deed was innocent of all wrong to him and his.

Lord Warrington had left that day with a shooting party and would not return for a week, he was told, and he went home quietly.

He would wait a week, a year, ten years, and it would be the same in the end.

Three days afterwards poor Rosa was buried. A merciful coroner's jury brought in a verdict of "Found Drowned," and kindly men tried to believe it was by accident she had met her death, but there were some who had known it all along (such people are everywhere). The Walters girls had always been giddy, and it was a mercy only one of them had come to such an end.

After the funeral all the family but Vauban shut themselves up. Mr. Walters felt it would be impossible for him to remain in the colony and be happy, so he intended after a week or so to sell his business, realise such estate as he had and go to some place where he was unknown.

It would be possible to hide the disgrace if they could not wipe out the sorrow.

Vauban meanwhile, to the surprise of many, was seen sauntering about the town and hanging about the camp without in a listless manner, like a man who has nothing to do but to lounge about.

He spoke to nobody, entered no place of amusement, or drinking saloon, it is true, but they could not help thinking it was strange, and people said he could scarce have loved his sister as he ought to feel so little grief.

But he was only biding his time and waiting for the return of Lord Warrington.

His purpose was settled, he knew what he would do, and his passion was so deep and intense that he could wait. Hours and days were nothing to him, he was not likely to swerve.

The week passed and Lord Warrington did not return. He had obtained an extension of leave and gone up towards the Transvaal blebok shooting. It was possible he might be away a month. Never mind, Vauban Walters could wait, and he still lounged about the town.

The month expired, five, six weeks, and the man he sought was still away. Vauban began to get impatient, not that his rage was growing cool, but he felt the irritation of the hunger of revenge unsatisfied.

"If he comes not soon," he muttered, "I will seek him."

Two nights afterwards Lord Warrington and his friends came back, brown, hearty and merry. They rode gaily into the town and dismounted at the door of the hotel. Close behind them came Vauban.

He went up to Lord Warrington and touched him on the shoulder.

"My lord," he said.

Lord Warrington turned and met his cool, steady stare. Vauban was a stranger to him and he asked him somewhat curiously what he wanted.

"My lord," he said, "my name is Walters, you remember my sister Rosa?"

"Well," replied Lord Warrington.

It must be remembered that as he went away early on the fatal day he had not heard of her death. Vauban knew nothing of this and the coolness of the supposed evil doer goaded him to madness.

"Her death lies at your door," cried he, "and yours, my lord, shall gladly lie at mine."

With that, quick as thought, he presented a revolver at the heart of the surprised listener and fired. Lord Warrington fell heavily and lay still, uttering no sound, and Vauban, taking advantage of the petrification of the bystanders, fled away.

"A word with you, Bella, here at once."

"What is it, Vauban?"

She was in her room by the window and he was in the yard below, with his flushed face upturned to her. His features blazed with triumph.

"I have shot him, Bella. He will never wrong another like poor Rosa."

"Shot who?" asked the startled girl.

"That brute, Lord Warrington."

"Vauban," she said, in terror, "have you killed him?"

"Ay, he fell dead at my feet. I have avenged her, and now I am off to the Transvaal. I can find a hiding there. Good bye."

"Stop, you mad boy," cried Arabella. "Who told you that it was Lord Warrington that wronged poor Rosa?"

"Father."

"He was wrong. It was Captain Trelawney. I have thought so many times, and only yesterday I found proof in some letters of his that she had hidden away in the old bureau."

"Merciful Heaven," cried Vauban, "why did you keep it from me?"

"How could I tell you purposed such a crime?"—his sister replied—"but see there, read for yourself," and she tossed a packet to him from the window.

He glanced over them feverishly, and with a stony despair in his eyes threw them up to her again.

"It is enough," he said, "I shall not fly now. They can hang me, for I deserve it."

The winter had come and the Duke of Gaveston had retired to Graystone, his country seat, taking with him, as he usually did, a train of guests. Graystone was always alive with hospitality during the dark months when the land around was bleak and bare, but when nature was at its best it was left to the servants, who yawned the days away within its spacious walls.

The rich and great turn night into day, and as they shun the day so they appear to avoid the sweet summer time, for it can never be enjoyed in London. The park at its best is but a poor imitation of the rich, rustic country.

But it is their choice, and we have nothing to do with the wisdom or folly of it. The duke went down with his guests, and among them was Hubert Trelawney, recently arrived from the Cape. Simultaneously with him came a dark story of wrong and a supposed avenging of a social crime.

Lord Warrington dead, so ran a private telegram, and his murderer in custody.

The men were full of it in the smoking-room of Graystone, and the women heard of it speedily. The married ones from their husbands and the single women from the married. Lady Hilda heard and refused to credit it.

"It is a lie of Trelawney's hatching," she said.

But while she denied it her heart said it was true, and she drooped in anguish, more for his falsity than his death. Her mother saw it and bade her think of him no more.

Lady Hilda sadly smiled, and the duke and the duchess talked of an antidote for her sorrow.

"There is Trelawney," the earl said; but the countess shook her head doubtfully.

"We may encourage him," she said, "but I fear he will never succeed."

He was encouraged, and he pressed his suit. Lady Hilda said neither yes nor nay, but listened listlessly as one does to music without interest. Trelawney persevered, and spoke of Lord Warrington as one to be forgotten.

"He was untrue to you," he one evening said, boldly, "why then should you be true to him?"

"Because I am a woman," she answered.

"Is it so easy to forgive a wrong?" he asked.

"To the dead," she replied.

"But for the living there is no forgiveness," he said, bitterly; and left her only to renew his suit again and again.

Constant dropping will wear away a stone, and he might perhaps have won her too. The odds, seeing that she had loved dearly, were against him, but in sheer passiveness she might have said "Yes" but for an arrival at Graystone. It was a pale and worn traveller who had come across the sea in hot haste to right himself by word of mouth, and he brought a witness with him.

It was Lord Warrington, who had not been fatally shot, as was at first supposed, but had lingered long on the brink of death, and at last by the strength of youth had conquered. The witness he brought with him was Vauban Walters, who had confirmation with him in the shape of those letters sent to poor Rosa.

There was a brief stormy scene between the lovers, then an explanation and peace. Hubert Trelawney, who had been out with a shooting party all day, came back to find the man he deemed dead with Lady Hilda in the drawing-room. It was as if he had met one risen from the dead.

He saw his fate in the eyes of the duchess, who looked straight through him, and in the averted looks of other ladies there. His story in all its grim, foul treachery was known, and he hurriedly left the room.

In the hall he encountered Vauban, who first made himself known to him and then thrashed him with a heavy hunting whip before half a dozen servants, who stood by and never raised a hand to interfere.

"Through you," said Vauban, "I nearly murdered one of the noblest of men, who has forgiven me the great injury I did him, first in thinking he could be as foul and false as you are, and then in attempting to take his life. You are not worthy of an honest bullet, and so I thrash you like a dog."

Trelawney was utterly cowed, and scarce made resistance to the sound thrashing he received

and he crawled from Graystone a despised and outcast man. For once society took notice of the seducer's crime and cut the wrong doer dead.

He went abroad, where he mixed for a while in doubtful society, and was within a year shot in a duel arising out of a quarrel at the gambling table. His end was not so much as noticed in the London papers, and it was years after when Lord and Lady Warrington, happily married, heard it spoken of as a reminiscence of gay life upon the Continent by one who had been a second to Trelawney's foe in the duel.

Vauban Walters only stayed long enough in England to see Lord Warrington married, and returning to the Cape went up country, where he is now famous as a daring hunter. His friends have left Durban, and their whereabouts is not known there, but they are supposed to be in the mother country, where they are well received and well to do.

The supposition is not far from the truth, and among their warmest friends are Lord and Lady Warrington and the duke and duchess, and they spend the winter, or the better part of it, at Graystone.

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

VOYAGING TURTLES.—It has been observed that turtles cross the ocean from the Bay of Honduras to the Cayman Isles, near Jamaica, a distance of 460 miles, with an accuracy superior to the chart and compass of human skill, for it is affirmed that vessels which have lost their latitude in hazy weather have steered entirely by the noise of the turtles swimming. The object of their voyage, as in the case of the migration of birds, is for the purpose of laying their eggs in a spot peculiarly favourable.

SUPERSTITION ABOUT STORMS.—Caverns were supposed by the Romans to be secure places of refuge during thunderstorms, and they believed that lightning never penetrated more than two yards into the earth. Acting on this superstition, the Emperor Augustus used to withdraw into some deep vault of the palace whenever a tempest was feared, and it is recorded by Suetonius that he always wore a skin of seal around his body against lightning. That both precautions were equally unavailing need scarcely be mentioned. Lightning has been known to strike ten feet into the earth; but not even the marvellous accuracy of modern science can determine at what distance from the surface a safe retreat may be found from the descending fluid; and even were this ascertained, the dangers from ascending electric currents remain the same. With regard to caulskins, we find that the Romans attached so much faith to them as non-conductors that tents were made of them, beneath which the timid used to take refuge. It is a somewhat curious fact that in the neighbourhood of Mount Cervennes, in the Languedoc, where, anciently, some Roman colonies were known to have existed, the shepherds cherish a similar superstition respecting the skins of serpents. These they carefully collect, and having covered their hats withal, believe themselves secure against the dangers of the storm. M. Labrousse is disposed to see a link of interesting analogy between the legend which yet lingers in the mind of the peasant of Cervennes and the more costly superstition held in reverence by his Latin ancestors. The emperors of Japan retire into a deep grotto during the tempests which rage in such severity in their latitude, but not satisfied with the profundity of the excavation, or the strength of the stones of which it is built, they complete their precautions by having a reservoir of water sunk in their retreat. The water is intended to extinguish the lightning—a measure equally futile, since many instances have been preserved in which the fluid has fallen upon the water with the same destructive effects as upon land.

FUNNY STORY OF A PAIR OF BELLIOUSE RAMS.—In a spectacular piece produced recently at the Wallner Theatre, of Berlin, two handsome rams were engaged as "supers," and gave nightly satisfaction to crowded houses by the grave and amiable conscientiousness with which they performed the parts assigned to them. When the play was withdrawn, the stage-manager resolved, in an evil hour, to take them home and put them up in his kitchen until the following morning. Shortly after daybreak the manager's cook, whose duty it was to prepare her master's morning cup of coffee and take it to his bedside, fulfilled this usual function with her accustomed punctuality, but unfortunately omitted to close the kitchen door behind her. The rams, impelled by natural curiosity, followed her into the drawing-room, through which she had to pass in order to reach her master's bedchamber. While casting a sleep's eye round the handsomely-furnished salon, they suddenly found themselves in the presence of two other rams; at least, such was the impression conveyed to them by the reflection of their own forms from the polished surface of a huge mirror adorning one side of the room from floor to ceiling. No ram that respected itself could be expected passively to endure so exciting a rencontre. Accordingly, the manager's guests, after deliberately taking the measure of their doubles, lowered their horns and rushed to the fray. So terrific a crash ensued that the panic-stricken cook let fall the breakfast tray with a shriek of consternation, and the manager, his slumbers thus rudely broken, sadly contemplated a scene of ruin and destruction. He is stated to have expressed his conviction that accommodating rams with a night's lodging in a private house is an injudicious practice.

A WOMAN FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS ON A DESERT ISLAND.—Some time prior to the year 1883 the Mission Fathers of Lower California, in their efforts to christianize and accustom to honest labour the Indian tribes on the coast, had placed them on various islands of the Santa Barbara group to pursue the fishery of otter and seal. One of these, San Nicholas, scarcely eight miles long by four broad, was after some time abandoned, and the whole of its inhabitants were brought away in a vessel by the good fathers. While they were leaving a gale suddenly sprang up, and it was at the same time discovered that a child had been left behind. The mother, a half-breed Indian woman of superior intelligence to her race, implored the captain to send a boat to shore for it. He refused, on the ground of peril to all the rest if they did not put at once to sea. Frantic and excited at the loss of her child, the woman leaped into the sea and swam back to the island in search of it. The vessel sailed, but having been wrecked off San Francisco, no return was practicable, and for 15 years no steps were taken to ascertain if the woman was living or not. Father Sonzaes having never forgotten her disappearance, offered at length a reward of 200 dollars for the rescue of woman or child, and the result, after three years more, was the discovery of the woman on the island, still in good mental and bodily health, but with the power of articulate speech gone. The vouchers for this extraordinary narrative and its details were recently given at length in Scribner's Magazine. The relics of this female Crusoe are still to be found at Santa Barbara.

THE HOTTEST CLIMATE.—The hottest climate in the world probably occurs in the desert interior of Australia. A thermometer was hung on a tree, sheltered from the sun and wind. It was graduated to 127 degrees, yet so great was the heat of the air that the mercury rose till it burst the tube; and the temperature must just have been at least 128 degrees, apparently the highest ever recorded in any part of the world. Nevertheless, in the southern mountains and table lands, three feet of snow sometimes fall in a day. The heat sometimes, it is said, sets the forests on fire.

REALISM EXTRAORDINARY.—An Iowa paper tells of two lovers who "were permanently separated by the interposition of a cold cloud of realism." Being interpreted, this probably means that they were not kindred souls. The circumstance recalls the instance of a romantic young lady, who had a very fine head of hair.

One evening when her affianced stood gazing at her inquisitively, she said, with much feeling, "John, are you thinking that each one of these golden hairs is like a cord, binding you to happiness?" "Well, no," he answered, mechanically. "I was thinking what a fine mosquito net it would make!"

DISCOVERY OF ANCIENT GOLD COINS IN IRELAND.—While two men were digging a drain near Lissycasey, between Kilsrush and Ennis, the other day, they came upon an iron-clasped chest of large dimensions, lying on which was a large sword. The men assumed that it was a coffin, and conveyed the intelligence of their discovery to the police at Lissycasey. The box was opened by the police, and to their surprise they found it to be full of gold coins of ancient date. The men claimed the treasure-trove, but the police sent to Ennis for a horse and car, and, escorted by a party of police, the box and sword were conveyed to Ennis station. On the sword was engraved the word "O'Neill."

A SULPHUR KING.—The story of Ignazio Genovardi, a Sicilian baron, senator, and "sulphur king" of Sicily, adds another to the many proofs that are constantly forcing themselves into notice of "the mutability of human affairs." The person who has recently been placed as a hopeless lunatic in a private asylum at Palermo is the son of a Sicilian letter carrier, who having raised, by means of speculations in the very smallest way, a modest sum of money, bought with it a plot of land near the village of Committini. The land so bought turned out to contain a valuable sulphur deposit, the working of which brought the postman's family immense wealth. Ignazio amassed a fortune which is said to have amounted to three million pounds sterling, was created a baron and a senator, and obtained sufficient influence to secure for his son, who was in the priesthood, a bishop's mitre. With his immense wealth he contrived to make himself so highly popular that he never returned from the exercise of his senatorial functions without being fêted as if he were a prince. But a change came. The son of the postman thirsted to be a leader of society, and spent enormous sums in the endeavour to gratify this desire. He was aided by certain of his "friends" in dissipating his wealth, and to such an extent that he not only spent every penny but became deeply involved, and was made bankrupt. He was also arrested for fraud, was tried, and was sentenced to imprisonment. The effect of this reverse of fortune was to turn him into a hopeless lunatic, and to convert his former admirers into abusive enemies. Formerly Genovardi was to the people of Girgenti "the honest and rich capitalist, and the benefactor;" now he is "the swindler, Genovardi, who never had a sovereign of his own to fly with." Formerly he was "the shrewd, the accomplished, the scholarly;" now he is "the dull blockhead who got himself made a senator when he was hardly fit for the post of usher," and is, to boot, one of the most wretched inmates of a lunatic asylum.

The San Francisco "Call" says that there is an exhibition in that city a curious book; if it may be called such, thus described: "It is composed of sticks, upon which are inscriptions in an unknown tongue. It was originally taken surreptitiously from a temple in Bangkok, and was purchased in Siam by the present owner. Similar books are placed in all the temples there, and they are jealously guarded both by law and by cultivating the superstitions of the people, who believe that death will overtake the person who rifles the temple of this precious treasure. This is the only perfect specimen known to exist outside the temples in Siam. The British Museum boasts an imperfect specimen, and has endeavoured to procure this one."

THE RUINS OF POMPEII.—From viewing the marvellous works of art that adorned the buried city we passed to the entresol and upper story to see the household utensils, the earthen dishes, the drinking vessels, the loaves of bread, and other remnants of charred food and clothing that were discovered among the ruins. These, I think, give the visitor a more vivid impression of the terrific calamity that overtook Pompeii

than even a visit to the city itself. Here are the bottles of oil, the pans filled with meat, the bread taken from the oven, the remains of fish, dates, nuts, eggs, and all other articles of food that supplied the table of a Roman family. They lived well, these Pompeians, fulfilling to the letter the Scriptural adage "Eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow ye die." They were merry to the last moment. Then the thunder pealed, the mountain shook, the ashen rain fell, and the burning flood poured around them. On our way from the Museo Madox I stopped for a moment at a little atelier of painting in the Neapolitan Park. A picture there shows two human figures prone upon their faces, the air grey with the falling ashes, and the sky lurid with lightning. It was called "The Destruction of Pompeii." With a shudder we passed out into the sunshine, and looking toward the terrible mountain to our right, sending its thick cloud of smoke into the azure air, we stopped to wonder what work of horror it may yet accomplish in the future to add to the awful record of its past.

GREAT FEAT IN REPORTING.—A remarkable achievement in stenography was that of the lady to whose kindness the Boston "Herald" is indebted for the accurate and almost verbatim report of Carl Schurz's fine speech in German at the reception by his Boston countrymen. The speech was translated offhand into English shorthand notes as it was spoken, instead of being taken in German and afterwards put into English, as is generally the case on such occasions. Mr. Thomas Allen Reed, of London, is regarded as the greatest shorthand writer in England, and his facility at taking both French and English equally well is considered a marvel. But when he takes a French speech his notes are in French. In the Canadian Parliament there are two sets of shorthand reporters, one to take the speeches delivered in English, and the other those delivered in French. But the mental processes necessary to such a work as that of the Boston lady will be seen to be remarkably complicated. First there is the following of the speech in German, which must have been done with the strictest attention. Then there is the instantaneous translation of the German words into their English equivalents. And, thirdly, there is the rendering of the English into shorthand characters while the ear is on the alert to catch the German. The quickness of wit demanded by such a performance is wonderful, and, as far as we know, it is unprecedented in the recording of public speaking. The lady gained her skill in this way by practice in taking notes at lectures in German universities.

THE SPIDER AND THE TUNING FORK.—While Mr. C. V. Boys, a young naturalist of South Kensington, was idly watching a spider spinning its airy geometrical web in the garden one day, the idea occurred to him to try the effect of a tuning fork held near the spider. The tone of the fork at once arrested the attention of the spider, who ran to the centre of the web, and crouched, watching. When the circumference of the web was touched by the fork, the spider tried every radial line to feel where the disturbance was created, and when he had found the right one he sallied forth upon it, and seized the prongs of the fork between his claws. It was clear that the hum of the fork had been mistaken for the buzzing of a fly. The deceptive power of the musical tone was further illustrated by Mr. Boys taking a dead fly which had been drowned in paraffin, and putting it on the web. When the fork was sounded near it, the spider pounced upon it and began to eat, but speedily left off as he tasted the unsavoury paraffin. The hum of the fork held near was, however, quite sufficient to make him return to the charge, forgetful of his past experience. It has long been known that spiders are sensitive to music, and will come out of their holes in a room to listen to it; and the observations of Mr. Boys would seem to account for the charm by the resemblance of the music to the humming noises made by insects.

A STRANGE ADVENTURE.—Mr. Farley, the Colonial Secretary of Honduras (says the "Daily

Telegraph"), while exploring the interior of the colony was overtaken by a drove of "peccaries" or wild hogs, and was compelled to scramble up a tree, dropping his rifle in the performance. The whole pack gathered round his perch, grunting and sharpening their tusks. Now the peccary is not only ferocious but patient, and, rather than let an object escape, will wait about for days, so that the unfortunate secretary had only two courses; either to remain where he was till he dropped down among the swine from sheer exhaustion and hunger, or else, by coming down, to be eaten there and then. While he was in this terrible dilemma, however, what should come along—and looking out for his supper too!—but a jaguar. Never was beast of prey so opportune, for the jaguar has a particular liking for wild pork, and the peccaries know it, for no sooner did they see the great ruddy head thrust out through the bushes than they bolted helter skelter, forgetting in their anxiety to save their bacon the meal they were themselves leaving up the tree. The jaguar was off after the swine with admirable promptitude, and the secretary, finding the coast clear, came down, reflecting, as he walked towards the camp, upon the admirable arrangements of nature, which having made peccaries to eat colonial secretaries, provided likewise jaguars to eat the peccaries.

A LION AND HIS KEEPER.—The majestic step, the bold look, the grace and strength of the lion, have obtained for him the title of king of the beasts. He is greatly indebted to the imagination of the poet for the noble qualities he is supposed to possess. He is, though capable of gratitude towards those from whom he has received kindnesses, often treacherous and revengeful, and Dr. Livingstone considered him an arrant coward. The story, however, which we are about to relate describes his better qualities. A lion was kept in the menagerie at Brussels. The animal's cell requiring some repairs, the keeper led him to the upper portion of it, where, after playing with him for some time, they both fell asleep. The carpenter, who was engaged in the work below, wishing to ascertain whether it was finished as desired, called the keeper to inspect what was done. Receiving no answer, he climbed up, when seeing the keeper and lion thus asleep side by side, he uttered a cry of horror. His voice awoke the lion, which, gazing at him fiercely for a moment, placed his paw on the breast of his keeper, and with a look that seemed to say, "He is in my care now, and touch him if you dare," he laid down to sleep again as though nothing had occurred. On the other attendants being summoned, they aroused the keeper, who on opening his eyes appeared in no way frightened at what had occurred to give his fellow attendants so much uneasiness for the safety of his life; but taking the paw of the lion in his hand, shook it and quietly led him down to the lower part of the den, which had by this time been satisfactorily completed.

POPULATION ABOVE THE SEA LEVEL.—The American Census Office has issued a bulletin showing the distribution of population above the sea level. It appears that nearly one fifth of the inhabitants live below 100 feet, i.e., along the immediate seaboard and in the swampy and alluvial regions of the south; more than three fourths below the 1,000 feet, while 97 per cent. live below 2,000 feet. In the area below 500 feet, nearly all the population is engaged in manufacturing and in the culture of cotton, rice and sugar. The interval between the 500 and 1,500 contours comprises the greater part of the prairie states and the grain-producing states of the North West. East of the ninety-eighth meridian, the contour of 1,500 feet is practically the upper limit of population. The population between 2,500 and 5,000 feet is formed mainly on the slope of the great Western plains. Above 3,000 feet irrigation is almost universally necessary for success in agricultural pursuits. The extensive settlements at the base of the mountains in Colorado are mainly between 5,000 and 6,000 feet. The population is almost entirely engaged in mining, and the greater part of it is located in Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, and California.



[RESCUED.]

THE EGYPTIAN AMULET.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

THROUGH that greatest of all mysteries—the mystery of Death—the life of Berenice Labordis was ushered in, for her mother perished in giving birth to her.

"Poor child!" said the old nurse, Marian Hagar, as she took the infant in her arms. But later, when the babe thrived and grew more beautiful, and sprightly, daily, she exclaimed, "This child's goin' to be a most uncommon one."

Her father, prostrated by grief at first, and then immersed in the scientific studies of which he was so fond, awoke, after some years, to find that he had a daughter who was almost a young woman, and who had grown, like all the women of his race, richly, darkly beautiful.

There was a legend of an Egyptian ancestress, who had been won from the banks of the Nile, by his grandfather, one of the French savans who accompanied Napoleon to Egypt. Now when he saw Berenice's warm colouring the unfathomable depths of darkness in her eyes, her southern exuberance of vitality, and her glowing beauty, the idea occurred to him, persistently, that she must

have inherited her tropical type of beauty from that mythical great-grand-dame rather than from her Creole parentage on the Louisiana bayou.

On the young girl herself the legend exercised an irresistible fascination. She read every book to be found in her father's library, on the customs and antiquities, the creeds and religious ceremonies, of the ancient Egyptians. The doctrine of the transmigration of souls, especially, attracted her, while it filled her with horror.

"What if my soul is the soul of Cleopatra, or even of one her maidens, dwarfed and distorted by its passage of two thousand years through reptile, bird, and beast, into poor little me," she said, one day, to her father, who listened aghast. For the first time he had a glimpse of the odd ideas, developing in his daughter's brain, in their isolated life on the bayou plantation.

"What was to be done with her?" was the question which now began to perplex him.

A visit from his sister, Madame Dejarnette, at this juncture answered the query. The fashionable lady listened to the story, and answered, briskly:

"I will take her to New Orleans. A winter there, and plenty of beaux, will cure her." Two months later, she wrote to her brother, "It has been a great success: your daughter is the toast of the town. My husband's nephew, and heir, with many others, is mad in love with her; and sometimes I think she is not indifferent to him; yet she is so wayward, no one can tell. It would

be an excellent match for both. We have quite set our hearts on it."

Berenice's character, as well as her affections, puzzled her aunt. One day the girl was bending over a case of antiquities in Madame's cabinet.

"Oh! where did you get this, Aunt Marie?" suddenly exclaimed Berenice. "It is Cleopatra's veritable asp, I declare."

Madame Dejarnette's brow contracted, ominously, as she looked at the antique ring, which her niece held up to the light. The design was common enough, a serpent, wound into a coil, with its head slightly erect. There was, however, it seemed to Berenice, a peculiar glitter in the green enamel of the scales, and a strange glow in the emerald eyes, which appeared to watch her, as she turned it about.

"Where did it come from, Aunt Marie?"

"It is uncertain," returned Madame, in her iciest tone. "It is said to be a family relic."

"I thought so," triumphantly. "Cousin Allyn, what will you wager that it did not once grace the finger of my Egyptian grand-dame? Or, who knows?" with a significant shrug, "perhaps my grand-sire may have robbed some mummy of it, for his bridal offering."

"When will you tire of that Egyptian nonsense, Berenice?" cried Madame, irritated.

"In my next two thousand years' probation, perhaps," returned Berenice, smiling. "But, Aunt Marie, do give this ring to me. I shall be absolutely miserable, if you do not."

"I shall give it to Allyn, to present to his betrothed," replied Madame, playing a bold card. "If it is an Egyptian amulet, it will make an appropriate gage d'amour. Don't you think so, Allyn?"

Young Dejarnette looked quickly at Berenice. But her face was bent over the casket, into which she had tossed the ring again. Allyn quickly picked it up.

"I shall never give this to anyone, unless you will accept it, Berenice," he whispered, holding it out towards her.

"Thanks," she answered, without glancing up. "But the virtues of the amulet would be annulled, for me, I fear, by the conditions of the transfer."

"There need be no conditions," he answered. "I think the ring should be yours, as it is a family relic. Anyhow, I quit my claim of it in your behalf."

Still she would not meet his eyes, or stretch forth her hand to take the ring.

"When you know that I am finally conquered, you can send it to me, à la Cleopatra, in a basket of figs," she said, with a nervous laugh.

"Very well," and he pocketed the jewel. "I will patiently bide my time. But, in the interim, I shall wear the ring about me, Berenice, as an amulet, or charm, to prevent any other than myself being your conqueror, dear."

She flashed at him a laughing glance of defiance; but abruptly changed the conversation; and nothing more was said about the ring for months.

When winter was over, Madame proposed a summer in Europe. "It will not only perfect Berenice's manners and education," she wrote to her brother, "but by throwing her and Allyn more continually together than ever here, it will further our joint views." The father assented, and the party of four set sail, monsieur and Madame, Berenice and Allyn. After some months spent in visiting London and Paris, they settled down in Dresden.

Here Berenice was as great a "success" as in New Orleans. Her admirers were counted by the score, and Madame began to fear she had made a mistake; for they monopolised the girl's time, and even thrust Allyn into the background, or rather he withdrew of his own volition. He was a proud man, and said:

"If others can win her from me, let them. I will, at least, give them a fair field. But if her heart and soul have need of me, she will recognise it when the time comes."

One morning, at breakfast, Berenice said:

"I am going, to-day, did you know it? with a party, to visit the Museum of Antiquities."

"Who is to chaperone the party?" inquired Madame.

"Oh! Madame De Selden," Berenice answered,

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with a laugh, "and she is a regular grimalkin of a chaperone, you know."

"But about your escort, my dear?"

Berenice turned a swift, half-mocking glance towards Allyn. "Mr. Alfried offered his services, but I declined making an engagement. Indeed, I told both him and Mr. De Selden that I had reserved this special occasion for you, Cousin Allyn—if you choose to avail yourself of the honour."

Madame looked gratified; monsieur smiled. Allyn glanced up inquiringly, for of late she had rather snubbed him.

Her merry eyes faltered a trifle, and she blushed.

"To tell the truth, I have a selfish reason. They tell me that one of the mummies has a serpent ring, that, from the description, must be exactly like yours. I want you to come, so that I may compare them."

"But the ring is at your service."

Berenice blushed again, for she remembered what she had said about it months before. She drew back.

"Oh! no, I couldn't take it, you know—"

She broke off embarrassed. Her uncle, at this moment, interposed.

"But I'm afraid, dear, if you don't borrow it, you can't make the comparison, for I want Allyn to go to Berlin, this afternoon. I've had a telegram about some business there—"

"Nay, nay," interrupted Allyn, seeing how the face of the girl fell, "the train doesn't start till late, and I'll have time to go, for awhile, to the museum. You shan't be disappointed, Berenice." The smile, with which she repaid him, more than compensated for the equivocal reason she had given for asking his escort.

CHAPTER II.

AN hour or two later, they were going through the Gräbersaal, where the mummies were kept. Miss Labordie felt a thrill, half of horror, as they walked on past monuments, and sarcophagi, with their ghastly inmates. This feeling deepened when she left behind the riam-headed sphinxes, with the emblematic suns betwixt the horns, the colossi of porphyry, and the lotus and papyrus symbols of Upper and Lower Egypt, and began to approach the gravestones, and all the other accompaniments of Egyptian burial. Before a sarcophagus of granite the party stopped at last, to hear the eminent antiquarian who went with them decipher the hieroglyphics carved within. These, he explained, described the appearance of a departed soul, at the judgment, before Osiris, and the goddesses Isis and Nephtiti.

"What is this?" asked Miss Labordie, putting her finger upon a phonetic representation of a sacrificial offering.

"That," said the antiquarian, "is a steer, being offered for the repose of the soul."

"I suppose no one offered a steer for the repose of my soul then," whispered Berenice, over her shoulder, to Allyn Dejanette.

"And I am glad none was offered, as your spirit and mine are wandering together, at this time," he replied, in the same tone.

Berenice turned her face quickly away, and followed their guide to the next sarcophagus.

This was a large one, also of granite, only it was covered with painted hieroglyphics. These were deciphered as representing the dead, watched over by Anubis and Amenté, and the inscription was a prayer to Anubis for a delightful burial, and repose for the kingly Rechs, etc. Just beyond, in a curtained alcove, on two pedestals of porphyry, was an ornate grave-chamber of alabaster; and within lay a hideous, swathed mummy, the one wearing the serpent ring!

"Let me have the relic," whispered Berenice excitedly to Allyn, as they bent forward to behold the ghastly sight.

Dejanette gave her his ring, and as soon as she could, without attracting attention, Berenice laid the ring close against the one worn by the mummy. Directly she stepped back to Dejanette's side.

"They are exact counterparts," she whispered. "How very strange!"

"Why strange? Thousands of diamond crosses are made, after the same model, in this age. The serpent, you know, was an object of worship with the old Egyptians, and its emblem was as common as the cross is with us."

Nevertheless, even he could not altogether reason down a thrill of superstitious wonder, as he heard the savant's rendition of the hieroglyphics and bas reliefs on the alabaster burial chamber.

"The characters," affirmed the antiquarian, "represent the mummy to be that of a beautiful maiden of the court of Ptolemy Anletes. The first syllable of her name, you see, is represented by a basket—(Bir) in an oval shield—the other characters are, many of them, the same as those for the name Cleopatra, to whom there is an allusion lower down. Hence, the maiden's name was Berenice, and her connection with the daughter of Ptolemy was an intimate one."

Berenice looked at Allyn with wide-open, startled eyes.

"Perchance," she whispered, only half-jestingly, "the maiden was grieved to death, by the loss of her beautiful queen, and so was invested with that sacred emblem of the asp. I wonder if the mummy in the British Museum, supposed to be Cleopatra, wears a ring like this. Maybe not. Perhaps your ring is Cleopatra's, after all; and that ring, and that mummy may be me and my ring. Who knows?" With a shiver, half-affected, half-earnest.

"Settle the point, dear, by making this your ring," urged Allyn, in a whisper.

She glanced shyly towards him, but there was an excited look in her eyes which he did not like to see. "No," she said, and laughed nervously. "I am this Berenice, you see; and can wear no other rings but hers."

A sudden resolve compressed his lips.

"All's fair in love and war," he quoted, bending over the mummy.

The antiquarian, and the rest of the party, led by the guide, had passed on to a group of monuments, at the entrance of the astronomical hall. The sarcophagus of alabaster was, as we have said, in a curtained alcove. Allyn and Berenice, for the moment, were alone in the recess.

"What are you doing?" the girl asked, suddenly, and an exclamation of fright and horror burst from her lips, as she saw that Allyn had slipped the mummy's ring off, and was fitting his in its place. "Don't, oh! don't," she protested, vehemently. "The penalty must be something awful."

"Therefore, the reward should be in proportion," he said, offering her the ring. "You will not surely refuse that, for which I have dared so much."

But Berenice shrank from the ring, shivering.

"If," he said, smiling, "your spirit is a wandering one, from this beautiful Berenice, let mine be united in it, by this symbol deemed sacred in her day."

"A horrible fatality would rest upon such a betrothal," the girl said, shuddering again.

"The ring would be a deadlier asp than that of Cleopatra, for I would die a daily death, with my finger encircled by a trophy won as from the dead. How could you be guilty of such sacrilege? Give me the other ring back again."

He smiled triumphantly.

"You will take the other ring then, and acknowledge yourself conquered?"

But Berenice was not yet prepared for unconditional surrender.

"I will never accept this one," she said. "Replace it, and we will talk, some other time, of what is to be done with yours."

Seeing her resolved, he was about to obey, when they observed the guide returning to seek for them. Berenice was at once nervously anxious lest their fraud should be discovered.

"Let us go forward to meet him," she urged, setting the example.

"But," protested Dejanette, following her, "I will—I must replace the ring."

"Another day we may have a better chance," she said, hurriedly, as the guide joined them.

They were thus constrained to rejoin the rest

of the party; and, awhile later, Allyn was compelled to make his way to the train. Meantime, he had been unable to re-exchange the rings. But in making his adieu to Miss Labordie, he managed to transfer the one, taken from the mummy, to her hand. "It will be safer with you," he whispered. "But for Heaven's sake do not try to make the exchange till I return. The attempt is more than hazardous."

Berenice felt strangely dejected and forlorn, when he had finally departed; and her adorers, Alfried and De Selden found her so uncompromisingly perverse that they were at last constrained, in self defence, to attach themselves to other ladies of the party. The ring, all this while, weighed heavily on her conscience; and, despite Allyn's warning, she determined to try to replace it.

No opportunity presented itself, however, until the entire party, grown weary of sight-seeing, were returning through the Gräbersaal, on their way out from the museum. Loitering behind the others, on pretence of examining some curious bas reliefs, Berenice found herself alone, as she reached the alcove, where the alabaster sarcophagus reposed. Slipping behind one of the pedestals, she stood quietly until all the party had passed into the next apartment. Then she emerged from her hiding place; and though the mere idea of touching the hideously snarvelled beauty was horribly repugnant to her, yet the desire to recover the amulet of her Egyptian ancestress was so strong that it overcame this emotion.

It was but the work of a moment to lift the blackened, parchment-like fingers, and draw off the bauble she coveted. But as she hurriedly tried to restore the other ring, she was suddenly startled by the slamming of a distant door. The echoes, resounding about the arched galleries and rooms, made her spring to her feet in nervous trepidation. Both the rings slipped from her grasp, and falling to the floor, vanished together into a remote corner. The sound she had heard warned her that her friends were leaving the museum; nevertheless she resisted the impulse to fly in pursuit; and kneeling down, groped about in search of the rings. She recovered both, but with difficulty, after a prolonged search, for the evening shades were gathering, and in the shadowy alcove only the sense of touch was left to guide her. But which was hers, and which the mummy's? For the life of her she could make no distinction. With a hap-hazard guess, she slipped one upon the dead finger, and, determined not to risk again the loss of the other, she thrust that on her own finger. But as the circlet grasped the flesh, she felt a sharp, stinging sensation. The pricking was so sharp that she looked for the cause, and was surprised to perceive that the serpent's head, usually erect, was bent down towards the finger. Moreover, the mouth was slightly open, while a slender, pointed tongue protruded, and pressed against the delicate cuticle beneath. A pain, simultaneously, crept up her arm.

"What can this mean?" she said, with a queer tremor. She took a pin, and lifted the head of the serpent, which sprang into place, with a click, showing that it had been hinged on a hidden spring. Not the tiniest puncture, however, could she perceive. The skin appeared but slightly reddened; and laughing at her momentary fear, she rapidly pursued her friends.

Through the Gräbersaal, and the next division leading into it, she hurried, but only, when she reached the hither entrance, to find the great door fastened.

A shiver of horror quivered through every nerve at this discovery. Was she, indeed, shut in alone, with all those awful surroundings, this dead and resurrected past? She shook the bolt vigorously, calling aloud in desperation. Only the reverberations answered, echoing and echoing down the hall, dying in shrill, sepulchral whispers among the tombs and sarcophagi of the Gräbersaal. In vain she made effort after effort to be heard. "Will nothing," she cried, "make them hear without?"

At last she desisted, and crept away from the barred door, feeling faint and sick in the oppres-

sive air of the closed vaults. Virtually, she was buried alive.

"But surely," she said to herself, "it cannot be for long. The rest of the party will miss me presently, and will return to search for me. Or Monsieur or Madame Dejarnette will wonder at my absence. 'Ah! I forget,' she exclaimed, wringing her hands. 'I told madame that I should spend the night with Rose De Selden. If only Allyn was at home! He would be sure to find me. Great heavens! if all those people should conclude that I have returned to my hotel, and never stop to ask about me.'"

But after awhile she rallied, for she was naturally courageous. She was not one to fear insensate stones, neither the equally insensate mummies. The vaults were dusky, though, and the hideous monsters of marble and granite looked ghastly enough in their uncertain outlines.

Berenice remembered to have observed a bench, in the Gräberaal, where she might rest awhile, for she was beginning to feel faint and sick, and thither she went. She now began to feel a numbness in the left arm, and remembered to have read that such was the effect of a sting of the asp. She recalled, too, what she had read of the poisoned serpent-rings, so often exhumed with mummies from Egyptian tombs. Had she received a deadly wound from the ring? A train of the wildest fancies passed through her brain, which appeared to her to be illuminated with flames of light. She seemed to be growing conscious of a sort of affinity with the disembodied spirits of the encoffined dead about her; it was, indeed, as if her spirit was endued with the faculty of holding converse with those which had once been enshrined in the mummies and buried in the sarcophagi of those around her.

Her feeling of languor deepened. Bodily she was lulled into a repose of infinite depths and delightfulness. Mentally she was conscious of new faculties of enjoyment awaking within her. Phantoms, like vague dreams of lands and people unknown, but familiar; phantom-like processions; strange and awful rites of religious ceremonial; songs without words; birds of brilliant plumage; a flora and fauna of another age and another world than hers. All these passed confusedly before her. There was a land of cloudless skies, and a blazing sun; vast cities, with odd and splendid temples, having shrines to terrible gods; wastes of tideless waters; bordering stretches of glistening, desolate sands. All was a blending of indistinct outlines. Yet she could not mistake the huge pyramidal shapes, nor the quarried cliffs teeming with the tombs of Egypt's dead: these were as landmarks in that realm of vagary. She knew herself to be one of the vast multitude of souls who, their spell of embalment broken, had returned to the Nile Valley of Unrest, there to begin anew the pilgrimage of centuries.

"I am dead," she whispered to herself, with stiff, pallid lips. "The sting of the asp has stolen away my life, and now another shall have possession of the spirit, which this body prized so much. Will Allyn love her as he has loved me? Will he, oh, Sphinx?—thou who canst read the riddle of the universe." For she had thrown herself, in her vision, prone between the forefeet of the majestic guardian of the Nile, and was gazing up into the calm, unmoved face, upon which the storms of ages might beat in vain.

"Ask of thyself," syllable the stony lips, in reply.

Then came a change of vision.

The Gräberaal was before her, once more; but she was dead upon the settle. The serpent ring was on her finger, and its poison was colouring the marble hand with its cyanotic tint. So Allyn would find her she knew, when he returned to Dresden. Yet, her spirit seemed to be in no sort of bondage to Death, as it floated among the phantom groups, gathering in the Gräberaal. With Rechs, to whom the gods had given a peaceful sepulture; with Hathor, the beloved of Osiris; with Sesostris and Rameses, her kings, she held free converse. They spoke to her of the judgment to come, and the sacrificial offering made for the repose of her soul, in the yielding of her life to the fangs of the sacred serpent.

And, more distinct than all, there hovered

about her the aerial form of Berenice, the Ptolemaic beauty. Together they paused beside the still, white figure on the settle.

"I am thyself," said the phantom beauty, smiling. "Thy beloved didst release me from the bonds of Death in withdrawing the ring, and now shalt thou wear it and repose for more than two thousand years, while I shall stay my pilgrimage with him whom thou hast loved. Behold the swathes and spices guarded by the asp. On the couch of alabaster shalt thou dream thy dream, for now I wake to joy."

Then it was that the aerial Berenice enveloped the pulseless maiden on the settle, who stirred, as in a pleasant dream, while a horror of great darkness fell upon the bodiless spirit of the luckless Berenice Labordie, for whom thought and feeling were alike involved in a coma of supreme unconsciousness.

She knew nothing—felt nothing more!

CHAPTER III.

THE tides of life without ceased not to flow against the walls of the museum. But the flux and reflux may have gone on for hours, days, or weeks, for all the reckoning kept by the mute inmates of the vaults. At last, however, the shadows of the night that deepened to impenetrable gloom in the Gräberaal were suddenly illumined by a glare of lamp light flashing through a wide door suddenly flung open.

"Here she is asleep on this bench," said the guide, in a voice which, breaking upon the profound hush, might have been mistaken for a trumpet of Doom by Rechs or Rameses.

"Ah, yes, here she is, poor, tired, frightened darling," whispered Allyn Dejarnette, who fortunately had missed his train, found that Berenice had not come home, and had been in search of her everywhere. "Berenice," he called, softly, laying his hand on the dark braids. "Berenice. Oh! what does it mean?"

For though the heavily fringed lids trembled and were then lifted and Berenice fastened a pair of bewildered, questioning eyes upon him; there was no joyful recognition in the gaze, no surprise, not even a pleased anticipation of release from her dreadful imprisonment.

He tried to assume a cheerfulness he did not feel.

"Why, Berenice," he said, in a tone of jest, "you look as if you have had a vision. Your eyes have such a far-seeing gaze."

She shivered, rising to her feet. A second later she glanced down at her finger and at the fatal ring. Dejarnette's look followed hers, and his face grew radiant, for he supposed it was his ring and that she had put it on voluntarily.

"My darling," he whispered, as the guide moved off on a tour of inspection, and he bent and kissed the hand wearing what he supposed was his betrothal gift.

"My own Berenice, my life shall be bound with yours, new in this same emblem of Eternity."

For the first time she smiled at him, but in an odd sort of way.

"Yes," she said, "the ring has bound our lives together, though the asp stung your Berenice to death. See where the poison entered to steal her from you."

The finger she extended towards him showed only a tiny blue splotch close to the ring. There was no puncture, not even the cicatrice of a wound. He looked anxiously at her face. The change in its expression was certainly peculiar. Had her awful surroundings turned her brain in the few hours of her imprisonment in the Gräberaal?

"Berenice," he said, tenderly, "you have only been dreaming, dear. Forget these horrid visions and let us go hence."

She passed her hand over her eyes and forehead in a dazed kind of way, but walked beside him obediently, almost as a somnambulist would. Not even the sight of the mummies by which they were passing seemed to arouse any feeling in her, until just as they came alongside of the alcove, and the light of the guide's lantern flared

for an instant on the ghastly face of Ptolemy's court beauty.

Then, as by a sort of awful fascination, Berenice's gaze was turned upon the alcove. She saw the blackened, swathed figure and the parchment-like fingers, and the rays of light seemed to invest with venomous life the sinuous contortions of the asp and its glittering emerald eyes.

Uttering a shrill, sharp cry of terror the girl turned swiftly and clung to Allyn, shivering and trembling.

"What is it, dear—what is it?" he cried, shielding her on his breast.

"I know not," she panted, urging him on. "Only the serpent charms me! And that fearful mummy seems horribly familiar; as though it had at some time been to me a prison house of doom. Take me away. What power is it—what—"

She faltered in her rapid gait and leaned against him heavily. Then he saw that she had fainted.

Lifting her in his arms he bore her from the building, called the carriage, and drove rapidly to the hotel. Her terrified aunt summoned immediately the best medical attendance the city afforded.

But, alas! the vagaries of that night in the Gräberaal were but the beginning of a seemingly interminable train of wild fancies, all turning on Egypt and Cleopatra and the ghosts of the dead past. For many weeks indeed Berenice hovered close upon the confines of insanity.

Brain fever the doctors called her disease at first. Yet when the fever-thirst was slaked the fountain of memory, almost the well-spring of youth and of life itself, seemed to have been lapped up by its tongues of fire.

Things the most familiar had grown unreal to her. Remembrances of places and people, even the dearest, came to her only as ghostly shapes. And it was long before this passed away.

She grew more richly beautiful day by day it is true, and her fresh charms and graces of both body and mind enthralled anew her lover. And to the fervour of his affection she gave an answering ardour of devotion.

But no hue of health returned to the cheek and the lovely form grew daily more attenuated, nay etherealised. Even when Allyn Dejarnette had made her his bride not the tenderest care his love could lavish upon her, neither the balmy skies of Italy, nor the health-giving Spas of Germany, could win her back to strength or subdue the unnatural lustre of her eyes.

"Her native air and the quiet and good nursing of her own home, might effect a change," decided the baffled physicians, at last.

So they bore her back to the Louisiana bayou, and she was placed once more in the care of the faithful Marian Hagar.

"She's been bewitched," said the superstitious Hagar, watching the languor and debility of her charge. "She's seen unnatural sights, or she's got a charm workin' in her veins."

"Where did she get her snake?" she asked, suspiciously, of madame.

Madame Dejarnette started, then smiled at the folly of her own superstition, but still she took the trouble to explain to Hagar the legend of the Egyptian relic.

Old Hagar nodded her head.

"She shan't wear that ring more'n twenty-four hours longer, sure's you're born!"

Madame may have found herself infected by Hagar's superstition after all, at least she did not open her lips to betray the contemplated robbery.

Hence that very evening while Berenice slept her sleep of utter exhaustion the Egyptian amulet vanished from her hand. Madame expected her to be inconsolable at the loss of the ring, but it was Allyn who made the only lamentation. If his bride regretted it she made no allusion to the fact beyond an occasional uneasy touching of the blue circle that marked her now empty finger.

Marian Hagar nodded her head, well pleased,

for Berenice's rare smile. Allyn was in the original, said, earned what had. Be this turned to memory was miniscence. Gräberaal crowded by her fevered. So the bridged, into a love beautiful

It is capable of acres of field of 5,250,000

DURING New Zealand. In very favour past 11 years

THREE amounts. Post Office Banks. The interest standing to Bank Fund paid and credited to \$55,497 12s

CONSUMPTION Norway has years, as the arts demand 1861 to 1881 mines in op of 3,450 tons to 5,200 tons 34,550 tons was exported of the entire

A SAVOURY good cheese melted, add Beat together in a hot oven

MOLASSES eggs, two he two teaspoon water; salt stir very thin

ASPARAGUS tender, fresh with a small still, steam it is tender yolks of five, eggs, and serve

VEAL STEAK strips, three peel twelve slices one in the bottom and pepper, layer of veal thus; of slices of

for Berenice's restlessness vanished, and her rare smiles grew more and more frequent. Allyn was jubilant at the change without knowing the origin of it; while madame herself, if sceptical, was discreetly silent. One day Hagar said, earnestly:

"Twere that ring, 'twere the miserable snake what had put a charm on the child."

Be this as it may, health and strength returned to Berenice. Moreover, as the lapses of memory were filled in with more pleasing reminiscences, the recollections of the vision of the Gräberaal faded into indistinctness, or were crowded back among the brighter vagaries of her fevered brain.

So the fateful period of her life was safely bridged, and Berenice Dejarrette blossomed into a lovely realisation of Berenice Laborde's beauteous maidenhood.

STATISTICS.

It is estimated that the United States is capable of maintaining an area of 200,000,000 acres of corn-land, which with the average yield of the past 10 years, would yield upwards of 6,250,000,000 bushels of corn.

DURING the last six years the population of New Zealand has increased no less than 55 per cent. In vital statistics this colony shows in a very favourable light, the death-rate for the past 11 years being only 12.13 per 1,000.

THREE papers recently published show the amounts which have accrued for interest in the Post Office Savings Deposit, the Savings Banks Fund, and the Friendly Societies Fund. The interest which has accrued on securities standing to the credit of the Post Office Savings Bank Fund is £1,119,381. 2s. 1d.; the interest paid and credited to trustees of savings banks is £1,410,399. 16s. 11d.; and the interest paid and credited to trustees of friendly societies is £55,497 12s. 4d.

CONSUMPTION OF NICKEL.—Nickel-mining in Norway has largely increased within a few years, as the increased use of the metal in the arts demanded a much larger supply. From 1861 to 1865 there were but eleven nickel mines in operation, with an average annual yield of 3,450 tons. In the next year the returns rose to 5,200 from fourteen mines, and increased to 34,550 tons in 1875, the greater part of which was exported. Norway yields about one-third of the entire nickel consumed in the world.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

A SAVOURY DISH.—Melt a quarter-pound of good cheese in the oven. When sufficiently melted, add one egg and a wine-glass of milk. Beat together till it resembles a custard. Bake in a hot oven a light brown.

MOLASSES CAKE.—One cup molasses, three eggs, two heaping tablespoonfuls of cold butter, two teaspoonfuls of soda in half a cup of boiling water; salt and spice, of each one teaspoonful; stir very thin, and bake quickly.

ASPARAGUS OMELET.—Boil two pounds of tender, fresh-cut asparagus in very little water, with a small portion of salt, or, what is better, still, steam the asparagus without water until it is tender, chop it very fine, mix it with the yolks of five, and the whites of three, well-beaten eggs, and two tablespoonfuls of sweet cream; fry, and serve quite hot.

VEAL STEW.—Cut four pounds of veal into strips, three inches long and one inch thick, peel twelve large potatoes, and cut them into slices one inch thick; spread a layer of veal on the bottom of the pot, sprinkle in a little salt and pepper, then a layer of potatoes, then a layer of veal seasoned as before. Use up the veal thus; over the last layer of veal put a layer of slices of salt pork, and over the whole a layer

of potatoes. Pour in water till it rises an inch over the whole; cover it close; heat it fifteen minutes, and simmer it an hour.

KEFKEER.—Boil two tablespoonfuls of rice, and drain it as dry as possible. Have ready some previously-cooked fish, pulled with forks into nice small pieces, and free from all bones and skin; add it to the rice, and make it hot over the fire. Just before serving beat up two eggs, and stir well into the rice and fish. Add a little cayenne and salt to taste.

LAMB CUTLETS.—Trim the slices free from fat, beat up the yolk of an egg with rasped bread or crackers, season with pepper and salt, dip in the cutlets, and fry in butter gently until thoroughly done.

THE LOVE THAT LASTS.

THERE is never a love like the old love.

When troubles are thickening fast;
More staunch than a new or a bold love,
'Tis the anchor that clings to the last.

Whether deep night or tempest-haze fold
Love,

Whether waxes or dwindles its star,
'Tis the gleam of the first and the old love
That beacons the soul from afar.

"The little bird-shop is long darkened—

Oh, where are the cheery old pair
Who lent it their presence? We've
hearkened

In vain for their step on the stair.
Can the sharp cold have crept to their
chamber?

And, wolf-like, their feebleness stilled?
Let us straight to their poor attic chamber,
With those that are gentle and skilled."

Year in and year out had they flourished,

Or seemed to, just there, till of late—
The odd, shrinking couple, well nourished,
It was thought, with no war against fate.
But now as the neighbours passed, grop-
ing,

Up the stair, at the little shop's rear,
It was half between doubting and hoping,
Lest a miserable sight should appear.

There, destitute, freezing, they found
them,

But wrapped in each other's embrace,
Naught but penury's bareness around
them,

And with death growing on them apace.
Kindly hands were now helpful, but slowly
The old couple died, still content
That each folded each in the holy

First love which their lives had so blent.

Unknown the sad tale of their sinking

Thus in age to so bitter an end,
But the tie thus their hapless lives linking
Could to all its sweet homely lend:

For all varied fates that can fold love,
There is none like this balm for the
heart;

And theirs was the true and the old love
That clings, and will never depart.

N. D. U.

MISCELLANEOUS.

LUCIA ZARATI's original cradle is now one of the interesting features in connection with the Midgots at Piccadilly Hall. Lucia when born was three inches in length, and weighed two-and-a-half ounces. Now, in her nineteenth year, she weighs four and three-quarter pounds.

THE Master of the Mint, remarking that no fourpenny-piece has been coined since 1856, says that the coin continues to be withdrawn in considerable quantities, and adds the sad words that they will shortly cease to circulate.

It is proposed to hold the fourth Annual Army Rifle Meeting at the César's Camp Ranges, Aldershot, on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednes-

day, the 27th, 28th, and 29th, of June. The object of the meeting is to encourage and improve rifle shooting in all branches of Her Majesty's service. It will be open to the army, navy, Royal Marines, and Auxiliary Forces, with special matches for "all comers."

MR. GOSCHEN has paid the ransom demanded for Mr. Suter, the Englishman recently captured by Turkish brigands.

THE death is announced at Epernay of M. Moët, head of the well-known champagne firm. He leaves a fortune of a million and a quarter sterling.

THE death is announced at Hanley of Dr. Bernard Davies, aged 80; well known in the scientific world as the author of "Crania Britannicus." He made one of the largest collections of skulls in Europe.

IN 1842 over 1,100 articles of import were subject to Customs duties. Such articles are now about 20 in number, and none of them of any great importance, except tea, tobacco, and wine and spirits.

THOSE who are not in trade and cannot have an idea of its magnitude, may have a sensation of astonishment at hearing that the Singer Sewing Machine Company are in search of 30 acres of land whereon to erect a workshop big enough to turn out 10,000 machines per week.

A FEW days ago a well-dressed man in attendance at a service at St. Paul's, suddenly took off his boots and stockings and stood upon his head. He was ordered to leave the church, which he did without a murmur, assigning no reason for his remarkable conduct.

A VERY curious spectacle for those who love war on a small and harmless scale will take place in September next. The French Minister of War has decided that in that month there shall be a mock attack in due form of one of the new Parisian forts. A division of the fifth army corps will undertake this manoeuvre, for which the budget committee has voted the necessary funds.

WHILE one of the Customs lockers was on duty recently in a bond in Timber Bush, Leith, he saw a serpent slowly emerging from a bale of cork. He immediately seized the dangerous reptile and killed it by pouring brandy on its head. On being examined it proved to be of a very venomous kind, and measured about two feet long. It is supposed to have been revived by the heat.

It is stated that the Post-Office authorities are engaged in organising an inland parcel post, which is to come into operation in October. At first the maximum weight will be four pounds, and the minimum charge will be sixpence, payment to be made by parcel stamps. The delivery will be by carts and special messengers in towns, and in rural districts by postmen. It is also said that we are to have sixpenny telegrams after this year.

At a house near Lugand (Southern Switzerland) several hundred trained pigeons are kept for the purpose of conveying across the Italian frontier small packages, which are tied to their feet and contain a miniature lady's watch each. These packages are untied at the place of destination, whereupon the bird returns to Swiss soil. Each pigeon goes and comes once a day, and thus far these little-winged smugglers have met with no accidents. The Italian Customs officers have hitherto vainly tried to discover the place of destination of these airy defrauders.

IF what a San Francisco paper says is true, a really great discovery has been made, which may convert the far western deserts, where naught but the cactus now grows, into the chief wine-growing districts of the American continent. A man inserted cuttings from some vines into the trunks of the cactus-plants, and the result was that the vines grew forth as luxuriantly as on the most fruitful land, and this without cultivation or watering. Not only did he succeed in raising fine grapes, but he also found that melons, tomatoes, and cucumbers could be grown on the cactus. That hitherto much-abused plant may now prove one of the greatest blessings of man, and the arid and sandy desert may yet become more productive than the rich, well-watered prairie.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS should in all cases furnish us with their names and addresses. Letters signed simply with initials or a nom de plume may not always receive immediate attention, as our space is limited. No charge is made under any circumstances for advertisements appearing on this page.

E. G.—Gardening as an art was introduced into England at the commencement of the sixteenth century by the Flemings.

C. J.—To keep sparrows out of gardens, procure a few slender rods from six to eight feet long, as many ordinary-sized potatoes, and a quantity of various coloured feathers. Stick the potatoes full of feathers, and suspend them from the points of the rods, then plant the other end firmly in the ground. A pendulum motion will be maintained by the wind; the result will be that very few sparrows will come near garden plots so fortified. The potato should hang about 14 inches from the ground.

T. W.—Green paper on walls is favourable to the eye-sight. It has been said, however, that arsenic enters largely into the manufacture of green wall-papers, and that it is consequently highly deleterious to the general health.

A. W.—The Greeks knew nothing of the Chinese and the Romans little. In 530 the first silk-worms were brought from China to Italy. Confucius, their moral teacher, flourished about 550 B.C.

T. B.—The strength of an elephant is reckoned at that of 47 men.

M. D.—To get fat, partake of food containing starch and sugar.

P. P.—A good remedy for intermittent fever and ague is said to be the following: Peruvian bark, two ounces; wild cherry tree bark, one ounce; cinnamon, one dram; all pulverised; capsicum, one teaspoonful; sulphur, one ounce; port wine, two quarts. Let stand a day or two. Dose, a wineglassful every two or three hours in the day until the disease is broken; then two or three wineglassfuls a day until all is used.

J. C.—In the Roman calendar, the ideas meant the thirteenth day of each month except in March, May, July, and October, in which months it was the fifteenth day. The idea of March was the day on which Julius Cæsar was assassinated in the Senate House by Casca, Brutus, and other conspirators, 44 B.C.

F. L.—To dye aniline scarlet, for every forty pounds of goods dissolve five pounds of white vitriol (sulphate of zinc) at 130 Fahr., place the goods into this bath for ten minutes, then add the colour, prepared by boiling for a few minutes, one pound of aniline scarlet in three gallons of water, stirring the same continually. This solution has to be filtered before being added to the bath. The goods remain in the bath for fifteen minutes, when they become browned, and must be boiled for another half-hour in the same bath, after the addition of sal ammoniac. The more of this is added the redder the shade will become.

E. T.—Yes. Lemon juice, when applied to the skin with a camel's-hair brush is said to exterminate freckles and to have a whitening effect on the skin.

M. L.—The children of cousins are second cousins.

A. M.—The first sewing-machine was made by an Englishman named Thomas Saint in 1790, but it was not adapted for sewing woven fabrics. In the early part of the present century several other machines were made in this country and America, but none of them came into use. In 1830 a machine was made in France by a man named Thimonnier, and a number of them were in use for sewing army clothing. They were broken up by a mob, but after some years others were made and put into use, and they were also destroyed. About 1833 an American named Walter Hunt, living in New York, invented a machine, but did not get it patented. In 1845 Elias Howe, of Boston, made a machine which in many respects was like Hunt's machine, and had it patented in the following year. This was the first practical sewing-machine, and from it have grown all the different kinds of machines now in use. To Howe, therefore, may be given the credit of being the inventor of the sewing-machine.

Topsy, eighteen tall, dark hair, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of music, would like to correspond with a tall, fair, good-looking young gentleman between twenty-two and thirty with a view to matrimony.

MASTHEAD LOOKOUT and WEATHER HELMSMAN, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Masthead Lookout is twenty-one, medium height, auburn hair, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition. Weather Helmsman is twenty-two, tall, dark, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children. Respondents must be between eighteen and twenty.

CHARLEY, BILL and SAM, three friends, would like to correspond with three young ladies. Charley is twenty-five, dark hair, hazel eyes. Bill is twenty, tall, dark hair, blue eyes. Sam is eighteen, medium height, brown hair and eyes, fond of children.

TRIXIE, nineteen, medium height, dark hair and eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music, would like to correspond with a fair young gentleman between twenty-five and thirty.

TWO ASPECTS OF THE

DID you guess my thought, my sweet,
When our glances met to-day?
She was sitting at your feet—
Half in earnest, half in play,
With her sewing—our May.

What a baby hand it seemed
As she drew the needle through,
And the tiny thimble gleamed
After it like silver dew—
Life's first lesson, May, for you.

On the rosy, dimpled face,
What a serious sweetness lay:
Woman's wisdom—frolic, grace—
Of free childhood chased away,
Answering the call to play.

While you praised the task complete;
And your hand in mute caress
Folded up the kerchief neat
With a wistful tenderness,
I your inmost thought could guess.

Ah, my May, your soft eyes said,
As you watched her careless gloe,
You have woven the first thread
In a woman's destiny,
Of the warp and wool to be.

Will the web be dark or bright,
That the years to come unfold?
Heart of mine! He doth right,
Who the tangled skein doth hold,
Who His loving care hath told!

But I watched the merry elf
Dancing down through sun and shade;
Thinking: So she looked herself;
So my darling little maid,
Grave and winsome, worked and played.

You, the future—I, the past,
Mused of with a tender pain;
Shadows dimly o'er us cast,
We might strive to pierce in vain,
Vexed our eyes with hopeless strain.

Is there gain for every loss?
Ah, the lives to which we cling,
They may bear their heaviest cross—
May their sweetest music sing—
All unhelped of aught we bring.

I who hold your woman's heart,
Jealous, dearest, just of this—
That my childhood had no part
In your childhood's pain or bliss?
Answer, love, the lips I kiss.

Foolish fancy, sweetest wife!
Yet I could not choose but say—
Ah, that I had known her life,
In the dawning of her day,
In that time so far away—
Known the spring-time of my May!

TWO YOUNG GENTLEMEN, twenty and twenty-one, would like to correspond with two good-looking young ladies.

EVE and TOPSY, two sisters, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Eve is twenty-nine, and Topsy twenty-one.

TED and GEORGE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies between twenty-one and twenty-six. Ted is twenty-six, tall, dark, good-looking. George is twenty-four, tall, dark, good-looking.

SUSY and ALICE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Susy is eighteen, medium height, dark. Alice is nineteen, tall, fair, fond of home and children. Respondents must be fair, good-looking.

ALPHA, twenty-two, medium height, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady from seventeen to nineteen, medium height.

ERNEST, twenty-one, tall, dark, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady between seventeen and twenty-one, good-looking.

DAVID, twenty-six, fair, good-looking, fond of home, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

C. C. and H. H., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. C. C. has dark hair and eyes. H. H. is tall, dark. Respondents must be eighteen, dark, good-looking.

NORRIS ALICE and LAUGHING ANNIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Norris Alice is eighteen, tall, fair, brown hair, hazel eyes. Laughing Annie is eighteen, tall, dark hair and eyes. Respondents must be nineteen or twenty, tall, good-looking, fond of home and children.

CLIMBING IVY, eighteen, medium height, fair, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a tall, dark, good-looking young lady about twenty-three, with a view to matrimony.

MAGGIE M., twenty, tall, dark hair and eyes, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony.

WILLIAM, twenty-two, medium height, fair, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

BOOM STREET SNOB and BLUE HOUSE JOE, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Boom Street Snob is twenty-two, medium height, good-looking, fond of home and children. Blue House Joe is twenty-five, medium height, fond of children.

E. K., twenty-five, would like to correspond with a seaman in the Royal Navy. Respondent must be tall, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

BOB ROY is responded to by—May, eighteen, tall, brown hair.

W. D. by—A. W., twenty-nine, medium height, brown hair and eyes, fond of home.

GEORGE REX by—Daisy, twenty, medium height.

WANDERER by—E. H.

DARKIE by—Elsie, medium height, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition.

CLAWWILLIAM by—Alice, tall, fair, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of music and dancing.

BOB by—Annie, eighteen, tall, dark, fond of home and children.

VIOLET by—Leo, twenty, dark, good-looking, fond of home and dancing.

GERTRUDE by—Cyril, nineteen, dark, good-looking, fond of home and music.

ALICE by—Ernest, nineteen, dark, good-looking, fond of home and music.

DARKIE by—Daisy.

SWEET WILLIAM by—Violet.

BOB by—Lily.

W. D. by—GENNIFRED, thirty-two, medium height, good-looking.

RAY by—Happy Jack, twenty-one, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home.

W. D. by—Lotty M., twenty-four, medium height, fond of home.

BERRINI by—Daisy V., eighteen, tall, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition.

NELSON M. E. by—Maude E., tall, fair, blue eyes, fond of home.

WALTER FLINT by—F. G., eighteen, medium height, fair, fond of music and singing.

LONELY LILY by—Euclid, twenty, tall, dark, good-looking.

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††† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily authors should retain copies.

London: Published for the Proprietors at 334, Strand, by A. SMITH & Co.

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